

Alabamians Among Top Traffickers of Birds to Guam for Illegal Cockfighting, Investigation Alleges

Investigation Reveals Criminal Enterprises Continue

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, USA, June 11, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal Wellness Action (AWA) and the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) today asked U.S. Attorney Jay E. Town to investigate allegations of ongoing cockfighting activity in Alabama, including trafficking of game birds to Guam, a U.S. Territory.

The request for action follows an investigation by AWA and AWF that revealed that several Alabamians are among the top shippers of fighting birds to Guam.



Cockfighting Match

The individuals in Alabama are Jerry Adkins of Slick Lizard Farms; Royce Flores, and the late Jason Campbell, all of Nauvoo. It is alleged that Adkins and Flores breed and train birds and ship them around the world for the purpose of cockfighting.

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Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action

These individuals, according to shipping records, packed birds in boxes and sent them through the U.S. Postal Service to Guam for later use in fights. AWA and AWF have detailed information on a host of other major cockfighting operations in Alabama, with thousands of birds raised for fighting and shipped to Mexico, the Philippines, and other far-flung jurisdictions. Many of the cockfighting enthusiasts, whose operations dot many parts of the state,

appear to be affiliated with the Alabama Gamefowl Breeders Association, and the operations are so numerous and extensive that AWA has dubbed Alabama is the cockfighting capital of the

Southeast.”

Possessing and shipping birds for cockfighting have been banned under federal law since 2002 and has been a felony since 2007, when President George W. Bush signed the enhanced penalty provisions into law and also criminalized the sale of cockfighting implements. Mr. Town, based in Huntsville, is the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, which includes Nauvoo.

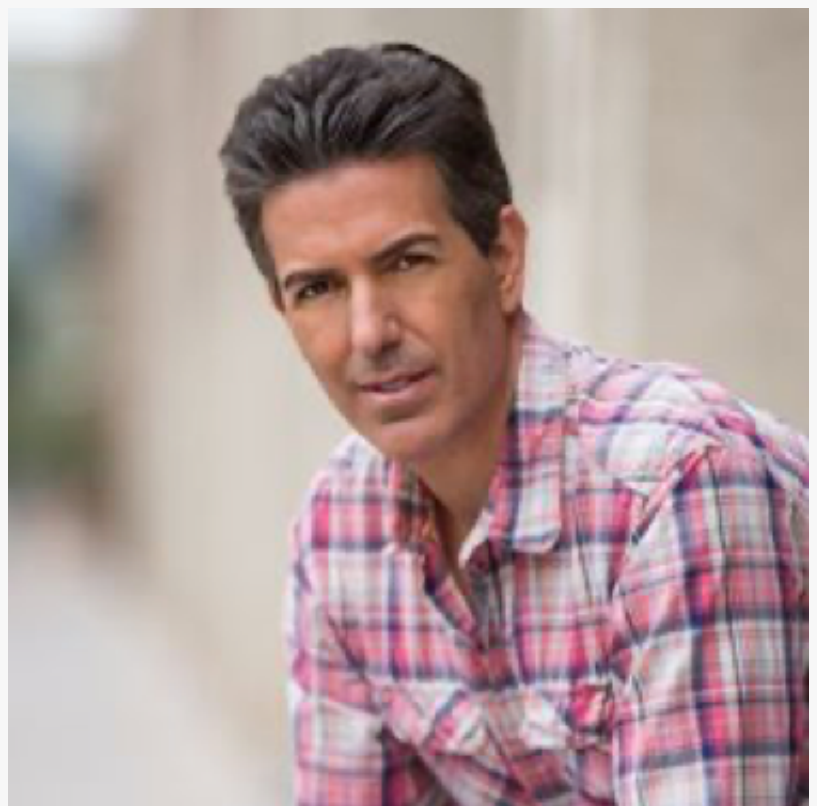
“It is a federal felony to buy, sell, deliver or possess any bird with the intent to engage the bird in a cockfight, and that’s clearly what we’re seeing,” said Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action and a native of Mobile. “Alabama has become a launching point for global trafficking of fighting animals, and it’s time for authorities to crack down on this criminal conduct.”

Through public records requests to the Guam Department of Agriculture, AWF and AWA obtained nearly 2,500 pages of avian shipping records dated November 2016 to September 2019. These records detail approximately 750 shipments of birds by 71 individuals from more than a dozen states to Guam.

Alabama cockfighters had the fifth highest total number of shipments to Guam. Mr. Flores was the top shipper to Guam from Alabama and the sixth biggest shipper in the U.S., selling more than 400 birds to Guam during the three years.



Marty Irby and President Donald Trump at the signing of the PACT Act in November



Wayne Pacelle

The shipping records reveal nearly 8,800 birds were sold and shipped as “brood fowl” but Guam does not have a significant animal agriculture industry or a show-bird circuit. Additionally, the ratio of roosters to hens in these shipments was nearly 10 to 1 with some shipments being over 100 to 1.

“It’s nonsensical to think of any animal agriculture enterprise requiring more males than females,” Irby said.

“Standard breeding protocols would have the ratio of male to female birds to be inverted, but male birds are used in cockfighting. Any reasonable person would conclude that these shipments was primarily for the cockfighting industry, which is robust on the island.”

The AWA and AWF investigation shows the Alabama operators to be running their illegal operations in full view of law enforcement and the public.

Adkins claimed in videos produced by the Philippines-based cockfighting broadcaster BNTV in April 2020 that he ships 6,000 birds a year from his Nauvoo farm to destinations for fighting purposes, including 700 birds to a single buyer in Mexico.

Those videos are available on [YouTube \(here and here\)](#).

“Selling 6,000 birds for the fighting trade would likely yield \$1 million to \$3 million in gross sales,” Irby said.

Federal authorities have busted major dogfighting operations in the state, but the state law against cockfighting is so weak it’s unusable. In 2016, the FBI broke up a fighting operation in Mobile County, but very modest penalties were imposed in the case at the recommendation of the Department of Justice, which was led at the time by U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions.



Jonathan Buttram, president of the Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association



Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby

When he served as a U.S. Senator, Sessions opposed efforts to make it a crime to attend a dogfight or cockfight or to bring a child to such a spectacle ([Roll Call Vote # 154](#)).

U.S. Senator Richard Shelby supported the prohibition on attending animal fights. Later, Sessions' successor, Doug Jones, co-sponsored legislation to ban animal fighting everywhere in the U.S. (H.R. 2971), and that provision was included on the 2018 Farm bill, with six of seven of Alabama's U.S. Representatives favoring the anti-animal fighting provision (Roll Call #202). President Trump signed that provision into law, and it took effect in December 2019.

Jonathan Buttram, president of the Alabama Contract Poultry Growers' Association has previously expressed concerns about cockfighters spreading avian influenza.

"Cockfighters ship birds very long distances, and engage in very intimate contact with the birds, sometimes sucking fluids from the air passages of the birds in order to keep an injured bird fighting," noted Buttram. "The shipments and the fighting birds would allow an avian disease to spread far and wide very fast and potentially to spread to humans. This kind of twisted entertainment does not warrant the disease risks."

Wayne Pacelle, president of AWA, called on Alabama state legislators to upgrade the state law against cockfighting, in order to better align that law with the state's tough anti-dogfighting law and the strong federal anti-animal fighting statute.

"While dogfighting is a felony, cockfighting warrants less in the way of penalties than a parking ticket," Mr. Pacelle noted. "The law imposes no jail time for perpetrators, a minimum fine of \$20, and a maximum fine of \$50. The law has not been upgraded since it was enacted in 1896."

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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