

Kentuckians Among Top Traffickers of Birds to the Philippines, Mexico, Honduras, for Cockfighting, Investigation Alleges

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, USA, August 6, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA) and the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) today asked U.S. Attorneys Robert M. Duncan and Russell Coleman, respectively covering the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky, to investigate allegations that seven Kentucky residents appear to be deeply involved in illegal trafficking of fighting animals, with most of them sending birds to far-flung destinations across the world including the Philippines, Mexico, and Honduras. In the same press conference, Senator Morgan McGarvey, based on the findings of the investigation, has announced he will introduce state legislation to make [cockfighting](#) and closely associated activities in felony in Kentucky.



Cockfighting that runs rampant in the U.S. | Photo: Shutterstock

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Kentucky Senate Minority Leader Morgan McGarvey

“Kentucky is at the center of the American and global cockfighting industry, with major operators shipping birds all over the world” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “We have amassed an abundance of evidence to demonstrate these individuals are almost certainly violating federal law.”

A detailed report covering the findings of the investigation points to apparent illegal animal fighting activities by seven individuals.

-Dink Fair Gamefarm, apparently run by Albert Dink in Smithfield, is one of the largest gamecock farms Animal Wellness Action has discovered in the

United States, with thousands of birds seemingly raised for fighting purposes.

-Chris Copas, of Bowling Green, described his participation in cockfighting at the World Slashers Cup Derby in the Philippines earlier this year. He stated that he won 2nd place and appeared on the cover of a cockfighting industry journal. (picture the journal).

-Cody Boone proudly announced on his Facebook page that he'd sold out his "cocks and stags again" and shipped them to "Hawaii, Guam, Honduras, Philippines, Kansas, Colorado, California, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, New Mexico, Mexico, and many more."

-Bobby Fairchild, of Clearcreek Farm in Manchester, and a broadcaster he conducted an interview with discuss that the mayor of a town in the Philippines has been importing and raising birds from Clearcreek Farm for over a dozen years for the purpose of cockfighting.

-"I've been involved in the sport for 31 years," Tammy Shive-Ayala, of Green River Gamefarm in Columbia, told one interviewer. "I married a man in 1990 and he fights the roosters and we really enjoyed it and he got me involved in it" and that "we send to breeders all over the world, Philippines, Guam, Mexico, Vietnam, Hawaii, everywhere, they go all over."



Wayne Pacelle



Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby

-An interview described Ron Isaac's home and alleged cockfighting complex in Carlisle this way: "The striking images of poultry that decorate the stairways and hallways are a nod to Ron's hobby – he breeds fighting cocks. And although this throwback to the pre-civil war south is now banned in the US, his birds find a welcome home in the Philippines where they fetch a good price."

-William Nall, of Windy Gamefarm in Boston, described his birds as having "great cutting ability." At one derby where his birds were entered to fight, he bragged, "We fought 9, won 7. Should have won, really should've won 8..."

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.

"There has been legal confusion about Kentucky dating back to my time as Kentucky Attorney General," said Chris Gorman, who served as the Democrat AG between 1992 and 1996.

"Cockfighting is a bloody and barbaric practice, and state law should align with the federal government's tough policies on this form of animal cruelty."

Kentucky Senate Democratic Leader Morgan McGarvey, D-Louisville, announced today the need for stricter animal cruelty laws next legislative session. "For too long, we've had a major gap in the legal framework against animal cruelty in the Commonwealth," Sen. McGarvey said. "I'm asking my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join in creating a bright-line standard through legislation that makes animal fighting and these types of activities, a crime."

Recently, a Philippines-based cockfighting broadcast company, known as BNTV came to the United States, with its hosts and production crew and visited 50 or so major cockfighting farms. During this U.S gamefarm tour, they produced and broadcast dozens of incriminating videos. With seven videos, Kentucky was second only to Oklahoma in the number of game fowl farms visited.

"These videos, combined with other evidence we've compiled, makes it apparent that these individuals are deeply involved in the cockfighting industry," said [Marty Irby](#), executive director of Animal Wellness Action and former agricultural policy advisor for former Congressman Ed Whitfield, R-Ky. "Law enforcement should put a stop to their lawbreaking and animal cruelty without delay."

While federal law bans animal fighting anywhere in the U.S. and a range of associated activities, including transporting animals for fights elsewhere, Kentucky law is anemic. It wasn't until 1974 that the Kentucky General Assembly passed an animal cruelty law that made cockfighting a misdemeanor. But just a few years ago, "under the ruse that a weakening of the law was necessary to deal with a blackbird infestation in Western Kentucky, fowl was omitted from the definition of "animal" in the cruelty law, effectively legalizing cockfighting," according to the Courier Journal. There was dispute about whether Governor John Y. Brown's veto of the measure

was timely, and that further muddled the legal status of cockfighting. In 1994, when someone charged with cockfighting challenged the validity of the law, the Kentucky Court of Appeals upheld cockfighting as illegal. Yet, even with that ruling, Kentucky's prohibition on cockfighting is misdemeanor only, and there is no ban on training or possessing fighting animals, being a spectator at a fighting spectacle, or possessing cockfighting implements.

In 2014, in his failed attempt to unseat Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in the Republican primary in Kentucky, former Governor Matt Bevin attended a rally of cockfighters. He apparently thought he had an opening on this subject because McConnell had supported a provision in the Farm bill to make it a crime to attend or bring a minor to an animal fighting venture. Bevin later claimed not to understand that the people assembled at the venue were cockfighters and he disavowed any support for cockfighting. Yet, during his four-year term, he took no actions to strengthen the law against cockfighting.

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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