

U.S. DOJ Arrests Alabama Cockfighter & Six Other Family Members for Involvement in A Range of Illegal Fighting Ventures

Federal action comes 16 months after Animal Wellness Action released a report featuring Brent Easterling and others involved in trafficking of fighting animals

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, USA, October 30, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA) and the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) applauded federal law enforcement authorities, including the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama and personnel from the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, USDA's Office of

Inspector General, and Homeland Security Investigations for indicting and arresting against several major cockfighting traffickers and operators based in middle Alabama. A federal grand jury returned a [23-count indictment](#) charging Brent Easterling, William Easterling, and five other family members based in Verbena, Alabama with conspiracy to violate the federal animal



Cockfighting that runs rampant in Alabama

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Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action

fighting law, including operating fighting operators, possessing fighting animals, and trafficking in cockfighting implements.

The 30-page indictment builds on pleadings before the U.S. District Court from the summer when federal authorities searched the property and ordered the Easterlings not to move animals from their property, because of their strong suspicion of involvements in illegal animal fighting ventures. The United States identified fighting pits nearby their two game fowl farms.

The arrests come just two weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court denied a writ of certiorari from

political leaders in Puerto Rico seeking relief from a federal law that bans cockfighting there and in every other part of the United States. The federal law against animal fighting has been consistently upheld by the U.S. courts.

In early June 2020, Animal Wellness Action and AWF released a detailed report identifying Brent Easterling as a major trafficker in fighting animals and implements. The groups presented extensive evidence to the United States about his involvement and shared a dossier on him with the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama and with other federal law enforcement officials. (That report is available to the media on request.)

“The arrests today by federal authorities send an unmistakable signal to every major cockfighting operator that there is no more business as usual when it comes to involvement in the barbaric practice of cockfighting,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “The Easterlings have been known to us for a long time as cockfighting traffickers, but also are part of a far larger network of animal fighters in Alabama and throughout the United States that have made America the breeding ground for the global cockfighting industry. While some are destined for fighting pits in the U.S., hundreds of thousands of birds move from cockfighting farms here to dozens of nations throughout the world.”

That June 2020 report also noted that several Alabamians illegally shipped fighting birds to Guam. The three biggest Alabama shippers to Guam come from the same tiny town of Nauvoo, Ala. One of the three shippers, Jerry Adkins of Slick Lizard Farms, told a Filipino television broadcaster that he sells 6,000 birds a year. With some birds fetching as much as \$200 each, that could generate millions in gross sales. For Adkins and his son, Guam has been, but a minor market compared to Mexico, where they sold 700 birds to a single purchaser in just one year.

Brent Easterling was not, according to our records, shipping birds to Guam, but he was moving them to Mexico, the Philippines, and to other states, including New Mexico. Brent Easterling’s L&L Game Farm Facebook page had frequent posts and boasts about his cockfighting activities, as did his personal page. Swiftcreek Game farm is the farm frequented by Brent Easterling’s brothers Billy and Bobby and Billy’s son Tyler.

AWA presented information to federal authorities revealing Mr. Easterling being interviewed by the Philippines-based cockfighting channel BNTV. That video has since been removed but we obtained a copy prior to the purging of the content. AWA also obtained BNTV videos where 10 other cockfighters in Alabama extol the prowess of their birds.

According to AWA’s investigation, the Easterling family members have used the U.S Postal Service for shipment of fighting birds and, in some cases, fighting implements.

“If law enforcement is going to shut down illegal cockfighting in my home state of Alabama, that work can only be by the Dept. of Justice because cockfighting is effectively decriminalized in the Yellowhammer State,” noted Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action and a

native of Mobile. "While dogfighting is a felony in Alabama, cockfighting warrants less in the way of penalties than a parking ticket, and the law hasn't been updated since the 1800's. The action of the United States in saying that it will not tolerate animal fighting operations will reverberate from Mobile to Huntsville and everywhere in between."

Under current federal law, it is a crime to:

- Knowingly sponsor or exhibit an animal in a fighting venture;
- Knowingly attend an animal fighting venture, or knowingly cause an individual who has not attained the age of 16 to attend an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly buy, sell, possess, train, transport, deliver, or receive any animal for purposes of having the animal participate in an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly use the mail service of the U.S. Postal Service, or any "written, wire, radio televisions or other form of communications in, or using a facility of, interstate commerce," to advertise an animal for use in an animal fighting venture, or to advertise a knife, gaff, or other sharp instrument designed to be attached to the leg of a bird for use in an animal fighting venture, or to promote or in any other manner further an animal fighting venture except as performed outside the U.S.;
- Knowingly sell, buy, transport, or deliver in interstate or foreign commerce "a knife, a gaff, or any other sharp instrument" designed or intended to be attached to the leg of a bird for use in an animal fighting venture.

Penalties for each violation of any one of these provisions allows for a maximum of 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for perpetrators, except for an adult attending an animal fighting venture. Penalties for an adult in attendance are 1 year in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Animal Wellness Action (AWA) 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 (AWF) 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.

The Center for a Humane Economy (CHE) is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

WAYNE PACELLE

ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION

+1 202-420-0446

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