

Groups Offer \$5,000 Reward for Arrest of Cockfighters Following Federal Indictments in Alabama Friday

Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation will Pay for Info that Leads to Animal Fighting Arrests, Convictions

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, USA,
November 1, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/

-- After applauding federal authorities for cracking down a major animal fighting operation in middle Alabama, the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) and [Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA) today announced a \$5,000 reward for information resulting in additional prosecutions of individuals for violating

the federal law (7 U.S.C. § 2156) against animal fighting. The announcement follows [Friday's 23 count indictment of seven cockfighters from Verbena](#).



Cockfighting that runs rampant in Alabama

Animal Wellness Action provided detailed information on alleged illegal animal fighting activities to federal authorities more than 16 months ago about Brent Easterling of Verbena. Federal authorities arrested Mr. Easterling on Friday, along with six other family members for a range of animal fighting activities, including maintaining fighting arenas, selling fighting animals through the U.S. mails, and shipping cockfighting implements.

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*Marty Irby, executive director
at Animal Wellness Action*

Based on the organization's extensive investigations, identifying that several of the top global shippers of cockfighting birds to Mexico, the Philippines, Guam, and

other distant locations, Animal Wellness Action has dubbed Alabama as “the cockfighting capital of the Southeast.”

“Cockfighting breeds a cesspool of other illegal activities, such as gambling and drug abuse,” said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action and a native Alabamian. “These are not the values held by Alabamians, and this lawlessness should not be tolerated. We hope the Department of Justice will review the details of our extensive investigations into a number of Alabamians involved in this criminal conduct. We also know other lawbreakers are out there and we need the public’s help to eradicate this blood-sport in the Yellowhammer State.”

Under the federal anti-animal fighting law, it is a crime to:

- Knowingly sponsor or exhibit in an animal 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 use 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 five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for perpetrators, except for an adult attending an animal fighting venture. Penalties for an adult attendee are one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine. The state law, which took effect in 2003 after voters approved an initiative, bans fighting and possession and allows for up to 10 years in prison for violators.

An “animal fighting venture” involves a fight conducted or to be conducted between at least two animals for purposes of sport, wagering, or entertainment.

Prohibitions on attending on selling, buying, possessing, training, transporting, delivering, or receiving an animal in an animal fighting venture; attending an animal fighting venture; or trafficking in knives or gaffs for use on a bird have long applied to all U.S. territories. As of Dec. 20, 2019, these prohibitions are effective in the U.S. territories: sponsoring or exhibiting an animal in an animal fighting venture or knowingly using the mail service of the U.S. Postal

Service, or advertising an animal for use in a fighting venture, to advertise a knife or gaff, or to promote an animal fighting venture.

“Federal agencies and officers have a duty to enforce our laws against the barbaric practices of cockfighting and dogfighting,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “But their good works depend on the cooperation and alertness of citizens. We ask people who know about illegal animal fighting activities to help us stop these forms of cruelty.”

What to do:

Anyone with information about illegal cockfighting activities can send information to animalcrueltytips@animalwellnessaction.org. Residents can also contact the appropriate U.S. attorneys, the state attorney general, or county sheriffs or district attorneys.

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.

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