

Animal Wellness Action Says Animal Rights Group Has It Right on Cockfighting Collusion in Atoka County

Groups says Atoka County Sheriff Tony Head in southeast Oklahoma has been delinquent in not enforcing the state's anti-cockfighting law

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wayne Pacelle, president of [Animal Wellness Action](#), issued comment about allegations from the animal-welfare group SHARK that Atoka County Sheriff Tony Head in southeast Oklahoma has been delinquent in not enforcing the state's anti-cockfighting law.

"Animal Wellness Action has acted on multiple tips on illegal cockfighting activities in Stringtown in Atoka County for two years. After conducting investigations to confirm the intelligence provided to us, we notified Sheriff Head and his deputies of upcoming cockfights, providing the location, time, and even the entrance fees for the cockfights. Not a single time did his office take any action to interdict the fight even though he is sworn to uphold the laws of Oklahoma. Our intelligence reports that he and his team were well aware of the fights in this small town and have done nothing but protect the people involved in this form of organized crime."

In 2020, AWA and the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) announced the results of a major investigation showing a major cockfighting industry openly operating in the state. Former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, co-chair of the National Law Enforcement Council of Animal Wellness Action, provided evidence to three U.S. Attorneys in Oklahoma about 21 individuals operating major cockfighting complexes in the state.

Included in that cache of information are 13 videos made by a Philippines-based broadcaster featuring Oklahoma-based cockfighters who marketed their birds for sale to other cockfighters around the world. AWA documented that two cockfighters – one in LeFlore County and the other



Oklahomans must emphasize to law enforcement that their job is enforce all laws--including those against cockfighting.



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*Wayne Pacelle, president,
Animal Wellness Action*

in Haskell County – have shipped 5,000 birds to Guam for illegal cockfighting activities in violation of federal law.

In 2022, Oklahoma Rep. Justin Humphrey, whose district includes Atoka County, introduced H.B. 3283 to gut the penalties in our anti-cockfighting law. His bill sought to decriminalize training and possessing birds to fight them. That bill did not pass the House and then died, as did a subsequent effort made to weaken the law made by Rep. Humphrey.

When Oklahoma voters approved the anti-cockfighting law

in 2002, they did so at the recommendation, among others, of then Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating and U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe. The Oklahoma Supreme Court [upheld the law](#) as constitutional in a unanimous decision after cockfighters challenged it. For several years, lawmakers then rejected a raft of bills to weaken the law and to embarrass the state by trying to legalize an activity that most states banned in the 1800s.

Law enforcement authorities often find that animal fighting is directly tied to other crimes, such as drug trafficking, illegal gambling, gang violence, public corruption, and additional forms of extreme animal cruelty and human-on-human violence.

Animal Wellness 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 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](#) 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.

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