

Animal Groups Call on KY Gov to Stop Tolerating Organized Crimes Conducted at Cockfighting Complexes Throughout Kentucky

Indifference by Two Kentucky State Police Posts Raises Questions About Possible Corruption

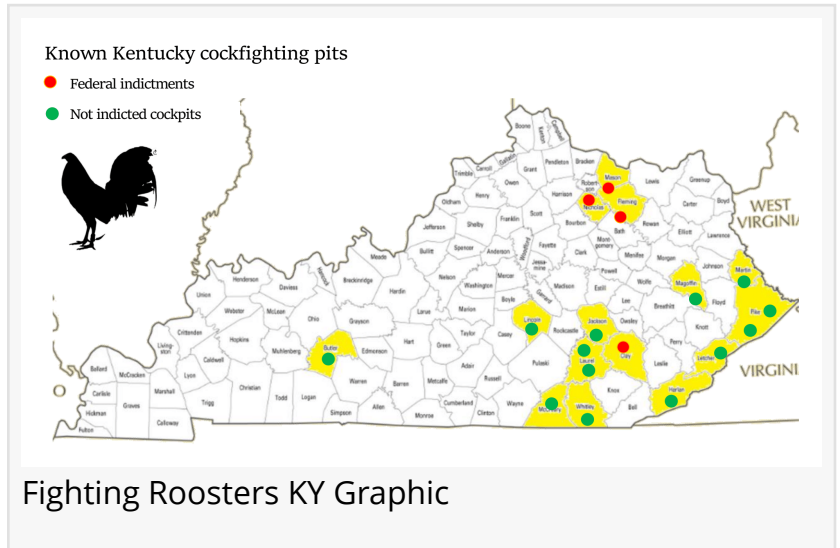
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Here is a link to the [FIGHT Act Summary](#)

(New Federal Anti-Animal Fighting Bill Introduced Today)

FIGHT-Act-Fact-Sheet.pdf (animalwellnessaction.org)



Citing a failure to act on credible information about organized crime and illegal animal fighting enterprises, Showing Animals Respect and Kindness (SHARK), Animal Wellness Action, and 50 other animal welfare organizations called on Gov. Andy Beshear and Attorney General Daniel Cameron “to initiate an investigation of the Kentucky State Police (KSP) for that agency’s unacceptable, repeated failures to enforce state law” against cockfighting and closely related organized crimes.

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Steve Hindi, president of SHARK

The organizations demanded that top state officials stop ignoring the problem of a vast organized criminal network involved in animal cruelty, illegal gambling, bribery, narcotics trafficking, and other illicit activities.

The organizations, led by SHARK, provided a litany of examples where highly credible

intelligence-gathering had uncovered plans for forthcoming cockfighting derbies at established brick-and-mortar fighting arenas, many with bleacher seating for hundreds, and some Kentucky State Police posts repeatedly ignored these reports of impending criminal gatherings. They ignored intelligence, including live drone streaming, that recorded people gathering at these complexes and filing into the arena with birds in hand for the fights. The letter, sent earlier this week to the Governor and Attorney General, also addressed Public Safety Secretary Kerry Harvey, asking that government leader to uncover why there has been a consistent failure to act on illegal activity.

“With the detailed information we have gathered — showing massive cockfighting complexes violating state and federal anti-cruelty and anti-gambling laws — there’s no excuse for these arenas to host even a single additional fight,” said Steve Hindi, president of SHARK. “My message to Kentucky State Police and to Governor Beshear: uphold the law as you are sworn to do and stop the mayhem and criminality that fester at these animal fighting spectacles.”

For more than two years, SHARK has penetrated the network of dozens of illegal cockfighting operations in the state and provided granular details about massive fighting derbies in Kentucky, with a majority of them in the eastern part of the state. Additionally, Animal Wellness Action has identified major cockfighting breeders throughout the state and released a report showing their illegal cockfighting trafficking activities.

You can access [AWA's Kentucky report](#) here.

“It’s bad enough that that vicious animal cruelty occurs at cockfights,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “But these are major illegal gambling houses, with hundreds of thousands of dollars in entry fees and illegal wagering at stake. We also know that cockfighting derbies are hotbeds of money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and human-on-human violence.”

Just days ago, there was a mass shooting at a cockfight in Hawaii, and two killed and three wounded at the venue. There was a person shot at a Dallas cockfight in March, and numerous other outbursts of violence at cockfights.

Recently, federal authorities arrested one cockfighter for attempting to bribe a county sheriff, seeking protection for his cockfighting venue. SHARK has obtained footage of Clay County sheriffs’ deputies in uniform attending a cockfighting.

In February, SHARK and Animal Wellness Action released a list of 16 cockfighting arenas from Butler to Pike counties that have illegally operated in the state. The organizations stress that there are dozens of other pits and traffickers who conduct illegal operations throughout the state.

SHARK singled out KSP Post 9 and Post 11 for failing to act on authoritative information about

fighting derbies. The report identifies Shaker Hill Pit Club in Butler County, the New Pine mountain Game Club in Harlan County, Charlies Game Club in Martin County, and Honest Abe's Game Club in McCreary County, and a dozen other pits that have had a long history of operations in the state.

In March 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice, with support from other federal authorities and the KSP, indicted 17 individuals for a range of animal fighting and bribery charges, including pit operators in Clay and Nicholas. One individual was charged with attempting to bribe a sheriff in Mason County.

Also today, 19 U.S. Representatives are introducing the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Trafficking (FIGHT) Act in Congress. The FIGHT Act, introduced by Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., and Andrea Salinas, D-Oregon, would enhance the enforcement opportunities under the law by banning simulcasting and gambling of animal fighting ventures; halting the shipment of mature roosters (chickens only) shipped through the U.S. mail; creating a citizen suit provision, after proper notice to federal authorities, to allow private right of action against illegal animal fighters and ease the resource burden on federal agencies; and enhancing forfeiture provisions to include real property for animal fighting crimes.

"In addition to playing host to an extraordinary number of fighting arenas, Kentucky is at the center of the American and global cockfighting industry, with major traffickers shipping birds all over the world," added Mr. Wayne Pacelle.

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 spreads. During this U.S game farm 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.

The presence of the fighting pits and the cockfighting breeders is particularly alarming in light of the Avian Influenza virus that has spread to Kentucky and 47 other states. The connection between cockfighting and avian diseases, including avian influenza, is detailed in a [new report](#) from the Center for a Humane Economy.

Fighting footage, pictures, reports, and other information referenced in this statement are available on request.

ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) working to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty.

SHARK is a national animal-protection organization focused on documenting and exposing

cruelty to animals and holding animal-abusers accountable under the law. With hard-hitting tactics and a fearless approach, along with expert use of technology, SHARK works to document human abuses of animals and show them to the world, with the aim of stopping these abuses once and for all. One of its major campaigns is to "Crush Cockfighting," designed to dismantle the massive network of cockfighting pits and breeders operating clandestinely and even openly throughout the United States.

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