

House Lawmakers Introduce FIGHT Act to Crack Down on Rampant and Illegal Dogfighting, Cockfighting Throughout the U.S.

Animal fighters are trafficking in millions of fighting animals and are involved in illegal gambling, narcotics, money laundering, shootings, and murder

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, April 20, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Driven by concerns for the barbarism of animal fighting, other criminal behavior comingled with it, and disease threats to poultry posed by transporting fighting roosters, U.S. Reps. Don Bacon, R-Neb., and Andrea Salinas, D-Oregon., introduced legislation to strengthen the federal law against dogfighting and cockfighting.



The FIGHT Act will give law enforcement more tools to squeeze dogfighters and cockfighters and end their cruelty.

Their bill is entitled the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Trafficking (FIGHT) Act. A companion Senate bill is forthcoming.

“

It's disgusting and inhumane that people profit off the cruel practice of forcing animals to fight for their lives. The FIGHT Act will embolden law enforcement to stop this abuse.”

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Nebraska

Reps. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., Nanette Barragán, D-Calif., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Mike Carey, R-Ohio, Troy Carter, D-La., Jasmine Crockett, D-Tex., Lloyd Doggett, D-Tex., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Penn., Mike Garcia, R-Calif., Lance Gooden, R-Tex., Tom Kean, R-N.J., Nancy Mace, R-S.C., Jim McGovern, D-Mass., Joe Neguse, D-Colo., Mike Quigley, D-Ill., Linda Sanchez, D-Calif., and Dina Titus, D-Nev., joined the two co-leaders as original cosponsors.

The FIGHT Act, amending Section 26 of the Animal Welfare Act, would enhance the enforcement opportunities by

banning simulcasting and gambling of animal fighting ventures; halting the shipment of mature roosters (chickens only) shipped through the U.S. mail (it is already illegal to ship dogs through the mail); creating a citizen suit provision, after proper notice to federal authorities, to allow private right of action against illegal animal fighters; and enhancing forfeiture provisions to include real property for animal fighting crimes.

"Tens of thousands of cockfighters and dogfighters raise millions of animals and sell them or enter them into fights for the thrill of the bloodletting and the illegal payouts and gambling," said Wayne Pacelle, president of [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#). "Most people rightly recognize animal fighting as a settled moral issue, but enforcement has lagged, and a vast animal-fighting underworld spawns cruelty and spills out other forms of crime and mayhem in our communities."

"It's disgusting and inhumane that people profit off the cruel practice of forcing animals to fight for their lives," said Rep. Don Bacon. "The FIGHT Act will embolden law enforcement to stop this inhumane and cruel animal abuse. I am thankful to Rep. Salinas for joining me on this legislation."

"Every day, countless animals endure horrific violence as people force them to fight for personal gain," said Rep. Andrea Salinas. "Cockfighting, dogfighting, and other blood sports are inhumane and unsafe – and Congress must intervene to protect innocent animals from such abuse. That's why I'm proud to partner with Congressman Bacon as we introduce the FIGHT Act. This bill would strengthen our ability to hold those responsible for illegal animal fighting to account. It's time to take a stand against cruelty."

"Illegal cockfighting is cruel and hits close to home," said Rep. Nancy Mace. "South Carolina continues to see heinous and illegal animal fighting activities, and we are committed to making our state a safe place for animals and people."

"Allowing wagering on animal fighting is another tragic example of illegal actors blatantly ignoring the law," said Alex Costello, vice president of government affairs at the American Gaming Association (AGA). "We must empower law enforcement to go after nefarious illegal operators, which is why the AGA is proud to support these key amendments to the Animal Welfare Act."

Moreover, these amendments will protect public health and safeguard poultry suppliers from diseases such as avian influenza and virulent Newcastle disease. Cockfighting involves close handling and transport of birds, including those who become bloody and severely injured at fighting matches, making the likelihood of disease transmission from birds to people substantial. Virulent Newcastle disease has entered the United States by illegal smuggling of infected cockfighting roosters from Mexico at least 10 times, causing the epidemic in southern California in 2002-03 and also a massive outbreak in 2018-20, producing 16 million dead birds and \$1 billion in outlays from the federal government in containment costs.

“Animal movements by people are the most important risk factor for spread of domestic animal infectious diseases,” said Dr. Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D., director of veterinary programs for the Center for a Humane Economy and a former 20-year infectious disease specialist with the USDA. “If cockfighting birds are infected, they have the potential to expand the geography and duration of viral outbreaks throughout the U.S. and the world.”

The FIGHT Act also would address the growing international broadcasting and wagering on cockfighting, in an era when sports and other forms of on-line gambling have emerged as multi-billion-dollar forms of wagering. Pitmasters LIVE sites are some of the growing platforms for people who want to wager on staged fights. Former Philippines president and strongman Rodrigo Duterte issued a ban on online betting at cockfights after dozens of people were kidnapped and never heard from again in the country. One woman reportedly sold her child to pay off her related gambling debts. Yet the Philippines continues to stream cockfights with digital payment platforms. These sites are available to U.S. gamblers, and while it is impossible to track the scale, it's clear they are surging in the United States.

“Animal fighting is one of the most heinous forms of animal cruelty,” said Leslie Rudloff, Esq., chief program and policy officer for Animal Protection New Mexico. “Despite laws to the contrary, animal fighting continues to occur across the country, bringing with it other crimes like human- and drug-trafficking and illegal gambling.”

In recent years, Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, the Center for a Humane Economy, and Showing Animals Respect and Kindness (SHARK) have conducted comprehensive investigations of cockfighting in Alabama, California, Guam, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, and Tennessee. While cockfighters stage illegal animal combat throughout the U.S. – at dozens of arenas in Puerto Rico and at facilities from Alabama to California to Kentucky to Oklahoma – America is also the cockfighting breeding supplier to the world, with countless fighting animals sent to Mexico, the Philippines, and other nations.

“Animal fighting is an epidemic in this nation, and we are excited that this bill will give SHARK and law enforcement more tools to put people in federal prison who commit these atrocious actions toward animals,” added Steve Hindi, founder of SHARK.

Under Section 26 of the Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. 2156, it is a crime to:

- Knowingly sponsor or exhibit in an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly attend an animal fighting venture, or knowingly causing 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.

A fact sheet on the FIGHT Act [is available here](#).

ABOUT

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 and to encourage enforcement of our laws. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Foundation is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization whose mission is to help animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability.

The Center for a Humane Economy ("the Center") is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing businesses to pay attention to animal cruelty in their operations and to eliminate harmful practices. We believe helping animals helps us all.

WAYNE PACELLE

ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION

+1 202-420-0446

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/629030109>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2023 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.