

# Carter County DA Charges Alleged Cockfighting Facilitators with Felonies

*Melissa Handke's Office, Cooperating with Sheriff Chris Bryant, Doesn't Bend to Appeals by Cockfighting Advocates to Ignore the Rule of Law*

CARTER COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, UNITED STATES, May 30, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal Wellness groups are applauding Carter County District Attorney Melissa Handke's Office for charging two residents with felonies for being alleged facilitators of a large-scale cockfight weeks ago. The groups also commended Carter County Sheriff Chris Bryant for adhering to the rule of law.



Cockfighting Match

"We are pleased the Carter County DA did not kowtow to pressure from cockfighters," said Kevin Chambers, Oklahoma state director for Animal Wellness Action. "The citizens of Carter County are opposed to animal cruelty and believe statutes outlawing cockfighting should be vigorously enforced. They have been served well in this case."

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*Kevin Chambers, Oklahoma state director for Animal Wellness Action*

Catlin and Darline Gavitt were summoned to court Friday and were both charged with two felonies: Keeping place equipment or facilities for cockfighting and Owning, possessing, keeping or training bird(s) for fighting. They each face the potential of prison and fines for their knowing violations of a law that's been in place for more than two decades. The defendants will be back in court July 18 for a preliminary conference, to determine if there is

enough evidence for a preliminary hearing, a courthouse representative says.

[Court documents for Catlin Gavitt can be seen here.](#) This is for case No. CF-2024 184

[Court documents for Darline Gavitt can be seen here.](#) This is for case No. CF-2024 185

Another defendant, Gustavo Barcenas Jr., who was arrested after fleeing the cockfight April 20, was in court today but his initial hearing for a reduced felony to a misdemeanor was postponed until June 7.

Carter County sheriff's deputies had acted on a successful tip of a cockfight in progress from Showing Animals Respect and Kindness (SHARK) and Animal Wellness Action.

Carter County Sheriff's Office had recommended the DA charge the defendants with four felonies after documenting dozens of fighting birds and an arena with chicken feathers on the ground at the location.

Animal Wellness Action had strongly encouraged the DA's office before the charges were read, to take cockfighting as a serious crime, and not cave to pressure as Anthony DeVore, the leader of an organized cockfighting network called the Gamefowl Commission was at the courthouse all week filming defamatory, personal attacks on TikTok against the DA and individual deputies by name as way to apply pressure for justice to go unserved.

Chambers had sent an email to Handke directly on Wednesday, urging her to enforce the law. [Read the entire letter by clicking here.](#)

This case is the second large scale bust in Carter County since June 2023, which was also a result of a tip from the same cockfighting watchdog organizations.

To help combat cockfighting as well as dogfighting, Animal Wellness Action has launched a new reward program that offers cash compensation not only for information that leads to arrests and convictions, but also for tips on the location of planned or occurring cockfights in the state. The organization will provide \$2,500 to any individual who provides tips to the organization or to law enforcement that results in arrests in Oklahoma for illegal cockfighting under state or federal law. Amounts for other information will vary based on the credibility and timeliness of the tips.

People with such knowledge may send an email to:

OKcrueltytips@animalwellnessaction.org.

#### ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. Twitter: @AWAction\_News

SHARK is a non-profit organization with supporters around the U.S. and beyond. SHARK receives no government funding and completely relies on donations and grants to work on issues ranging

in scope from local to worldwide. With a small core of volunteers, and a staff of five, SHARK battles tirelessly against rodeos, bullfighting, pigeon shoots, turkey shoots, canned hunts and more. President Steve Hindi has an open invitation to debate "the opposition." Because of his domination of past debates with animal abusers, however, it has been years since the opposition has taken him on.

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