

Animal Wellness Action Praises San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for One of the Biggest Cockfighting Busts Ever

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Noting that California may have more illegal cockfighting operations than any other state – with as many as 8 million birds, according to a prior report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the Center for a Humane Economy today commended the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for executing "Operation Crowing Rooster," a sweeping six-week enforcement effort that resulted in 56 arrests, the seizure of 3,500 fighting roosters, and the confiscation of cash, weapons, drugs, and cockfighting paraphernalia across the county.



Cockfighting Match

"This cockfighting raid is one of the biggest busts of a criminal animal fighting syndicate ever in the United States," said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a

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Wayne Pacelle

Humane Economy. "We applaud the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for undertaking this massive operation, and we offer our assistance to local authorities as the legal cases advance to hold perpetrators accountable and to disable this massive animal fighting ring in the biggest county in America."

From June 14 to Aug. 1, the Sheriff's Department's Rural Crimes Task Force served 26 search warrants in rural areas known for organized animal fighting. Ten individuals were

arrested on felony charges, and 46 on misdemeanor charges, including animal cruelty. Law enforcement also seized \$259,000 in cash, 12 firearms — three of them unserialized "ghost guns"

— along with quantities of cocaine, methamphetamine, and fentanyl.

It is illegal in San Bernardino to possess larger numbers of roosters; it is a state crime to possess fighting animals, and it a felony under federal law to possess, traffic, or stage battles with fighting animals. In addition to being an extreme form of animal cruelty — involving birds armed with sharp blades and forced to fight to the death — cockfighting often serves as a nexus for illegal gambling, narcotics trafficking, weapons offenses, and other serious crimes.

“We understand the logistical complexity of this operation, and that is why we send special commendation to the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Office,” added Pacelle. “Cockfighting is always bound up with other illicit activities, including unregulated gambling, illegal possession of firearms, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, and public corruption. When a sheriff’s office busts an animal-fighting enterprise, the law enforcement team stops a larger crime wave in the community.”

California must strengthen its animal fighting law, with its penalties the weakest in the West, according to the two animal welfare groups. Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy are also working with the national law against animal fighting. The Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Trafficking (FIGHT) Act, H.R. 3942 and S. 1454, has now been endorsed by 900 agencies and organizations, including the United Egg Producers, American Gaming Association, National Sheriffs’ Association, the National District Attorneys Association, and 21 state sheriffs’ associations, but the California Sheriffs’ Association is not yet among that set of endorsers. Rep. Nanette Barragán, D-44, Ken Calvert, R-41, Judy Chu, D-28, Ted Lieu, D-36, Josh Harder, D-9, Laura Friedman, D-30, and Scott Peters, D-50, are cosponsors of H.R. 3946.

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