

The Depravity Worsens Animal Fighting Takes an Ugly Turn



Face of a fight victim. ©VICKI FRANCE/BIG STOCK PHOTO



A dog tears into a hog. ©THE HSUS

Last year saw a resurgence of vicious spectacles known as hog-dog rodeos. The fights are lopsided contests, and our investigation indicated they are staged in 10 southern states from Florida to Arizona. Pit bulls and other trained attack dogs are loosed on defenseless wild pigs whose tusks have often been removed with bolt cutters. The feral hogs typically suffer severe or fatal maulings; disturbingly, the fights attract families with children.

With help from The HSUS, five members of a hog-dog fighting ring were arrested in Florida, including the president and vice president of the International Catchdog Association.

Our staff assisted in the investigation and prosecution of an Arkansas dogfighting ring, resulting in that state's first felony conviction for possession of dogs with intent to fight them. We conducted surveillance with Iowa police in a case of suspected dogfighters from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Our assistance in a Wyoming case resulted in authorities charging a suspect with animal cruelty and with breaking into an animal shelter to retrieve his fighting dogs.

Our six-year campaign to mandate nationwide felony penalties for animal fighting gathered momentum on Capitol Hill and all but assured successful passage of the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act in 2007. In significant state legislative victories, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina approved

new felony laws banning hog-dog fights. Our letters of complaint to several companies and to the U.S. Attorney in Texas persuaded Amazon.com, Best Buy, Circuit City, and other suppliers to stop selling dogfight videos.

The pace of cockfighting investigations never slackens, and in two of our biggest cases, local law enforcement raided a large California animal fighting ring in which more than a thousand gamecocks were seized and three key players arrested. In Oklahoma a cockfighting pit on Indian land was raided by federal authorities who had been in consultation with HSUS staff for months.

The Louisiana Senate approved a cockfighting ban by a vote of 30 to 4, but the measure died before final passage. However, this represented groundbreaking progress in the only state where cockfights remain legal, and the vote positioned us well for winning a ban in 2007. California, Illinois, and South Carolina increased penalties for participating in or attending cockfights, and we helped defeat an Oklahoma bill that would have allowed possession, transportation, and training of gamecocks.

In our ongoing offensive against blood sports, we persuaded prosecutors in numerous criminal cases of animal fighting and other cruelty to upgrade misdemeanors to felonies. We offered rewards for information in dozens of cases that led to arrests and reaped a number of convictions.



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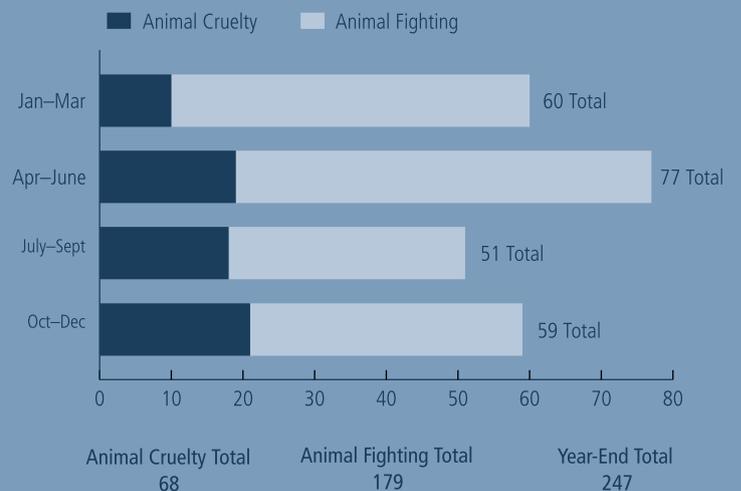
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“Animal fighting is truly horrible. I’ve seen a pit bull with most of her lower jaw torn off and a rooster whose chest had been sliced wide open. That rooster bravely let me pick him up and hold him as he took his last breath. These images inspire me to be the most effective advocate for animals that I can be.”

—John Goodwin, Deputy Campaign Manager, Animal Fighting Issues

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Cruelty Cases with Direct HSUS Involvement in 2006



Animals Cared for at Animal Care Centers in 2006

	Avian	Mammals	Reptiles	Amphibians	Total
Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch	162	1,049	29	—	1,240
Cape Wildlife Center	829	756	77	4	1,666
The Fund for Animals Wildlife Center	405	267	—	1	673
Total animals cared for by animal care centers in 2006	1,396	2,072	106	5	3,579