



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



COCK FIGHTING

An information leaflet on cock fighting.

WHAT IS COCK FIGHTING?

Cock fighting is a cruel blood sport that continues almost 200 years after it was made illegal. The cockerels are usually bred for fighting and will be placed in a fighting ring known as a cockpit and left to fight each other until one dies, or is so seriously injured it can no longer fight.

Some cock fighters will attach sharp spurs or blades to their feet to inflict more severe damage to the opposing cockerel.



WHY IS THE LEAGUE INTERESTED IN THIS?

The League Against Cruel Sports campaigns to end cruelty to animals in the name of 'sport' and this includes animal fighting. Despite being illegal since 1835, cock fighting remains an animal welfare issue in the UK.

The League continues to campaign for changes in legislation and crime recording to ensure that cock fighting is taken seriously by law enforcement as a crime in the UK.



**ANIMAL
CRIMEWATCH**

These include:

- A stronger legislative framework to tackle cock fighting, which treats it as a distinct crime, attracting heavier penalties
- Consistency in animal abusers receiving appropriate disqualification orders
- Introduction of offences relating to video recordings of animal fighting
- Police and law enforcement agencies to do all they can to tackle cock fighting.



WHAT IS THE LEAGUE DOING ABOUT IT?

- The League has the in-house skills and expertise within the intelligence team, made up of former law enforcement staff, to develop information received through our supporter-funded reporting system. Using a range of investigative tactics, we are able to convert information into actionable intelligence packages for law enforcement.
- We offer a reward of up to £1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of cock fighters.
- We are proactive and audacious in our approach to identifying suspected cock fighters.



WHAT KIND OF COCKERELS ARE INVOLVED?

The combatants, referred to as gamecocks (not to be confused with game birds), are specially bred and conditioned for increased stamina and strength. Male and female chickens of such a breed are referred to as game fowl. Cocks possess congenital aggression towards all males of the same species. Bets are often made on the outcome of the match.

There are a number of recognised breeds of cockerels bred and used for cock fighting. Some of these include:

Asil

The Asil or Aseel is an Indian breed or group of breeds of game chicken. It is distributed in much of India and has been exported to several other countries. Similar fowl are found throughout much of Southeast Asia



Kelso Game Bird

Kelso fowl are a variety of American Gamefowl developed by Walter A. Kelso, owner of Oleander Gamefarm. They're one of the most popular American Gamefowl



Shamo Roosters

Shamo is an overall designation for gamefowl in Japan. There are seven recognised breeds of Shamo chicken in Japan, all of which are designated Natural Monuments of Japan. The Shamo breeds are thought to derive from fighting chickens of Malay type brought from Thailand in the early part of the 17th century



Peruvian

Peruvian gamefowl is becoming popular in the Philippines and is one of the most sought-after in today's cockfighting but also the most expensive bird. As its name suggests, Peruvian gamefowl was developed in Peru and one of the oldest bloodlines.



Grey Francolin

The Grey Francolin is also known as a grey partridge or a Teetar. These breeds originate from India and southern Pakistan and are a preferred cockerel for the purposes of fighting. In 2013 there were two cases of grey francolins being smuggled in suitcases at Leeds Bradford Airport.

WHEN AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

As with all clandestine and illegal activities such as cock fighting, they will usually take place in locations out of the public gaze. Participants will want to make sure they do everything to make sure they won't get caught.

Those involved in cock fighting will have a need to breed sell and train cockerels and similar to dog fighting, will be keen to retain bloodlines of winning birds. These cockerels, may be sold via online 'pets for sale' type websites or via social media such as Facebook.

These include closed private groups on Facebook.

Research by the League on news reports of people convicted of cock fighting in the UK would suggest the locations include:

- Garden sheds
- Traveller sites
- Waste ground
- Rural farms
- Peoples private homes.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Often describing where the incident took place



can be difficult. We would ask you download and use the free app called **what3words** which can easily pinpoint your location. This app is also used by some police forces and will help them as well if you report the incident.



WHAT INDICATORS SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Cockerels used for fighting will need to be kept in separate 'pens'.



Signs of unusual activity at a location where numerous people and vehicles arrive and unusual sounds of cockerels can be heard, or loud or excitable voices can be heard.



Steel gaffs or spurs are blades shaped like a curved ice pick and are fastened on gamecocks over their natural spur.



The comb on top of a cockerel's head is used to regulate their temperature but it is full of blood and bleeds if damaged, so the cock fighters may remove the comb before a fight. This practise is known as dubbing.



WHAT'S THE LAW?

It's our experience, that cock fighting can sometimes be viewed as a gateway crime linked to violence, Serious and Organised Crime and Money Laundering. The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) 2006 Section 8 (AWA) makes it an offence to cause animals to fight. (Note the act isn't prescriptive about what animal(s) can be involved, so could be dog v dog, cock fighting, dog v cat or even ferret v rat. It also includes offences of: Attend a fight (without lawful authority or reasonable excuse), Receiving money for admission to a fight; Bet on the outcome of a fight; Publicise a fight; Encouraging attendance at a fight; Possess anything designed or adapted for use in connection with a fight; Keep or train an animal for use in a fight; and use any premises for fighting.

- Section 18 provides powers to alleviate suffering by removing a protected animal.
- Section 19 provides powers to enter premises (except a dwelling) for the purpose of searching for a protected animal which is believed to be suffering or will suffer if its circumstances do not change.

NOTE ** Section 8(3), (4) & (5) relates to video footage; Possess, Supplies, Publishes, Shows a video recording of a cock fight (not outside the UK) BUT this section has not yet been enacted and so currently there is no offence.

- Section 19 (4) provides powers to apply to a magistrate for a search warrant to enter premises (Section 17 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides additional powers of entry to arrest a suspect for AWA offences relating to the prevention of harm to animals).
- Section 54 provides powers to stop and search vehicles for animals. Remember Money Laundering Offences under Proceeds of Crime Act. Proceedings must commence within three years of the date of offence, and within six months of the date on which evidence that the prosecutor thinks is sufficient to justify the proceedings comes to light.

Recent changes in legislation have increased sentencing for Animal Welfare Act offences from six months to five years imprisonment now making it a serious crime.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you suspect cock fighting is happening now we recommend you call the police using 999 if you feel the matter is urgent, alternatively call 101 for non emergency.



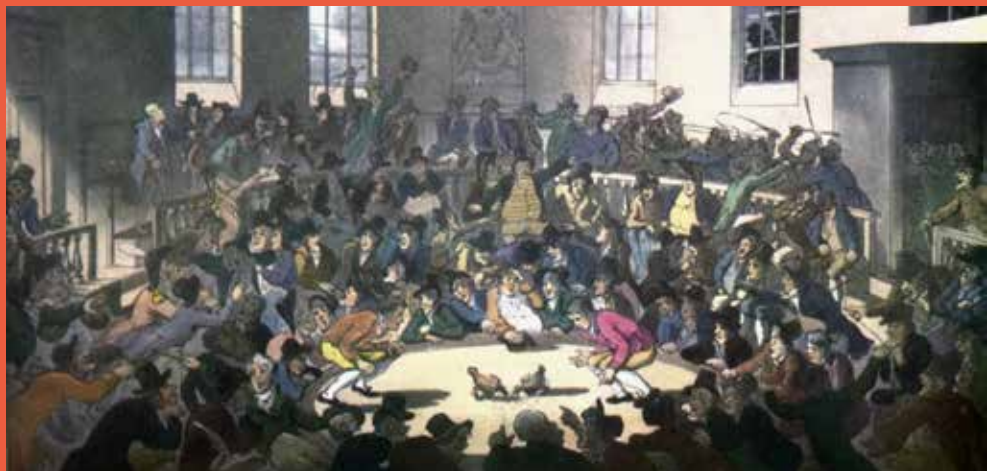
When calling the police, ask for an incident reference number, which can help when you contact us.

You can report the incident to us via our website reporting form

www.league.org.uk/animal-crimewatch/report/

or by calling our Animal Crimewatch Line **0800 444 1234**

It would be helpful if you can (without putting yourself at any risk) make a note/record any vehicle registration numbers and a description of the people.



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