



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

A close-up photograph of a pit bull dog's face. The dog has brown and white fur, large brown eyes, and its mouth is open with its pink tongue hanging out. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

DOG FIGHTING

WHAT IS DOG FIGHTING?

Dog fighting presents itself in different levels:

Level one - Street Rolls: Dogs are forced into spontaneous fights in urban parks and housing estates without much planning, rules or specific training.

Level two - Hobbyist: Often these people aspire to be professional dog fighters. These fights involve more 'rules' with training regimes (known as a Keep)

Level three – Professional: Professional dog fighters are part of organised dog fighting rings operating in the UK often with worldwide associates and sometimes have links to serious and organised crime. Strict training regimes and rules apply to the fights. It is thought money is involved in breeding the dogs as well as betting on the outcome.

There is often confusion between dog fighting breeds such as the American Pitbull Terrier (APBT) and protection dogs such as the Cana Corso, Presa Canario or status dogs such as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier and other Bull breeds.

There is also confusion that dogs with cropped ears are an indication of dog fighting, however it's our opinion this is not necessarily the case. Ear cropping is more associated with status and protection dogs to increase their 'aggressive' appearance.

Our Animal Crimewatch team have the experience to ensure we fully assess all reports, reviewing all the potential indicators and only focus on those that are suspected to be dog fighting, taking no action on anything else.



WHY IS THE LEAGUE AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS INTERESTED IN THIS?

The League campaigns to end cruelty to animals in the name of 'sport' and this includes animal fighting. Despite being illegal since 1835, dog fighting remains a significant animal welfare issue in the UK. It's one of the most horrific forms of organised animal cruelty, not only for the violence the dogs endure during fights, but for the trauma they suffer throughout their lives.

We campaign for a number of changes to ensure that dog fighting is taken seriously as a crime in the UK, including:

- A stronger legislative framework to tackle dog 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 dog fighting, treating it more seriously and recognising it as a 'gateway' crime

- The replacement of Breed Specific Legislation (Dangerous Dogs Act 1991) with a system focusing on 'deed not breed', as all dogs can be forced to fight
- Strengthened border controls and pet transport rules to prevent the cross-border movement of dogs for fighting.

WHAT IS THE LEAGUE DOING ABOUT IT?

- We have the skills and capabilities within our team of former law enforcement to develop information received through our Animal Crimewatch reporting system, using a range of investigative tactics, 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 dog fighters
- We're proactive and audacious in our approach to identifying suspected dog fighters.

WHAT KIND OF DOGS ARE INVOLVED?

We believe the favoured breed is the American Pit Bull Terrier (illegal), however globally many other breeds are used including the Dogo Argentino (illegal) and English Bull Terrier.

The pure breed APBT is the ultimate choice for a dog fighter which will usually come from a bloodline of winners and champions.

There can also be a cultural choice of breed for dog fighting such as within the Pakistan, Afghanistan communities favoring the white Bully Kutta and Gul Terrier

Fundamentally those dogs bred into dog fighting are isolated and deprived of other dog socialisation causing them to be dog aggressive not person aggressive. This is because the 'owner' will need to enter the fighting pit to encourage the dog, and requires the ability to 'handle' the dog.



American Pitbull Terrier (APBT)



Bully Kutta



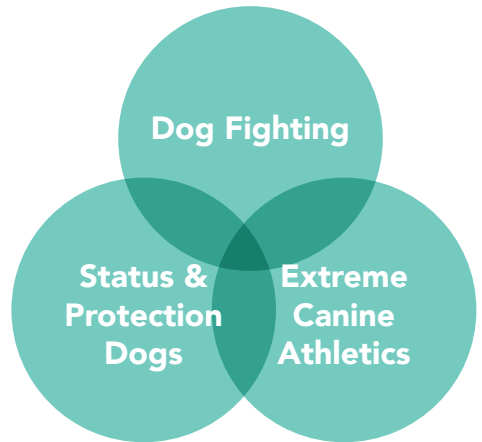
STATUS PROTECTION DOGS AND EXTREME CANINE ATHLETICS

There's a difficult crossover to identify when dogs are trained to be a status dog or protection dog and this extends to those involved in extreme canine athletics. The breeds of dogs, and the training regimes can be mistaken for illegal dog fighting activities and we are robust in our approach to filter out legitimate activity to focus on illegal activity. Some reporting from the public may be in good faith and anything that isn't assessed as being suspected dog fighting is ignored and not recorded.

A protection dog is a term used to describe a breed trained to be aggressive or act as a protection guard dog by its handler. On occasions these dogs may have their ears cropped to enhance their aggressive appearance.

A status dog is a term used to describe a breed that the owner wants to use as a weapon to support other criminal activity (e.g. drug trafficking or anti-social behaviour) or to enhance the owners image as intimidating to others. On occasions these dogs may have their ears cropped to enhance their aggressive appearance.

A dog trained for fighting will display aggression to other dogs and not people, and the opposite is true for status and protection dogs.



The training used for status and protection dogs, as well as canine athletics, can be mis understood as being dog fighting activity. They may use equipment such as weighted collars, treadmills, Slatmills, flirt poles and have break sticks.

To complicate matters further, both communities can take part in the extreme canine athletics events that take place around the country. As we investigate suspected dog fighters, we're always mindful to consider whether the interest is merely in canine athletics or if it extends into dog fighting. The dog breed is often a critical indicator in deciding which category a report falls into, and we must recognise that some people may fall into both or all three.

WHERE AND WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

Our analysis of dog fighting convictions spanning some 30 years or more shows there's no one profile of an offender or location, other than to say the nature of offending demands secrecy and a suitable location.

There have been dog fights in disused warehouses, inside houses/garages, in the back of a large transit van, on areas of wasteland, rural farm outbuildings and even an empty primary school swimming pool during a term time break.



WHAT INDICATORS SHOULD YOU BE AWARE OF?

We're not seeking information on legitimate dog trainers/owners but indicators of potential dog fighting. As with any indicators they are not to be viewed in isolation but used as a guide to determine if someone may be involved in dog fighting:

- Reports of dogs being aggressive to other dogs
- Sightings of section one illegal breed dogs such as the American Pitbull Terriers or Dogo Argentino
- Reports of dogs with injuries and scarring to the head, chest and front legs
- Unusually excessive training and conditioning.
- Use of a slat mill/ treadmill or carpet mill **"Not every treadmill owner is a dog fighter but most dog fighters have a treadmill"**



THINGS THAT MAY BE SEEN AT A DOG FIGHT

- Injured dogs with scars on the face, head, front legs or thighs with puncture wounds, swollen faces, and mangled ears
- Some kind of temporary fighting pit sometimes with carpet or canvas on the floor to maintain grip over the blood
- Break sticks which are used to force the dog to release its bite
- Scales used for weighing dogs before the fight
- Washing bowls to remove any noxious substances such as poisons from the skin before a fight
- Veterinary supplies such as intravenous drips, drugs – for example steroids and antibiotics, tools for stitching skin.



WHAT'S THE LAW?

It's our experience that dog fighting can sometimes be viewed as a gateway crime linked to violence, Serious and Organised Crime and Money Laundering.

Section 8 Animal Welfare Act

(AWA) 2006 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



NOTE ** Section 3, 4 & 5 relates to video footage;

Possess, Supplies, Publishes, Shows a video recording of a dog fight (not outside the UK) BUT this section has not yet been enacted and so currently there is no offence.



- Keep or train an animal for use in a fight
- Use any premises for fighting.

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 expanding the investigation opportunities of police.



BAIT DOGS

Dogs used as 'practice' (or 'bait') can be of any breed or size. Baiting is a particularly unpleasant practice which involves putting a weaker animal (dog or cat) in with a dog that's being trained to fight. The idea is to give them a 'taste for blood and killing'. There's much debate about whether dog fighters use bait animals. On the whole this is more of a perpetuating news story drawing a suggestion that when a dog is stolen it's being used as a bait dog, however there have been isolated incidents of this happening.



DOG FIGHTING TERMINOLOGY

The following terms are often associated with bloodline of fighting dogs.

1xW:

denotes a dog has won one fight.

2xW:

denotes a dog has won two fights.

Chain Weight:

A dog's weight before conditioning (natural relaxed weight).

Champion:

A dog has won three matches. This is commonly written as 'Ch'.

Courtesy Fight:

After a dog has lost a fight it may be allowed a 'courtesy' opportunity to scratch (fight) again to test if it will (want to) fight in the future.

Cur:

Any dog is not game; that shows signs and/or gives up or stops; cries, tail between the legs.

Dead Game (DG):

A dog that has died during or after combat while still trying to scratch.

Game (Gameness):

1. The sport of dog fighting
2. The combined qualities of courage, aggression, and tenacity in the face of utter exhaustion and possible death.

Game test (GT):

To determine a dog's gameness by rolling until completely exhausted, then having the dog prove gameness by scratching to a fresh dog.

Grand Champion:

A dog who has won five matches without any losses. This is commonly written as 'Gr Ch' or 'G Ch'.

Hard Mouth:

A dog with an exceptionally devastating bite.

Losing Game (1xLG):

A dog that lost a fight but didn't quit and was still scratching

Off The Chain (OTC):

A dog that is allowed to 'roll' and be game tested.

Pit:

Arena where fights are conducted; a typical pit is constructed of plywood walls measuring 24 to 36 inches high and approximately 14 to 20 feet square, although concrete, sheets of metal, and bales of hay have been used to construct a pit; the floor of the pit is usually covered with carpet or canvas to allow increased traction; many pits are designed to be disassembled so it's portable and easy to hide.

Producer of Record (POR):

A list of dogs established and maintained in the dog fighting journals; a sire and dam are given one point for each win of their immediate offspring; a male must have fifteen points and a female must have ten points to make the list; champion offspring will net the sire and dam of such one extra point; Grand Champion offspring will net two extra points for the sire and dam.

Register of Merit (ROM):

A list of dogs established and maintained by the Sporting Dog Journal; each dog is credited with one point for each champion produced and one additional point for each one of these champions who goes on to win a grand championship; a male dog must be the sire of at least four champions to get on the list and a female must be the dam of at least three champions.

Scratch:

A method by which a dog must demonstrate gameness in a pit contest; the act of rushing across the pit and taking hold of an opponent within a specified count, which can vary according to the rules of the fight; scratches are made from behind diagonal lines in opposite corners of the pit; the first scratch is a simultaneous release; subsequent scratches are alternating.

Scratch lines:

Lines drawn diagonally across opposite corners of the pit from behind which the dogs are set down and released and the dog has to cross, or scratch, after being released.



DOG FIGHTING TRAINING TERMINOLOGY

Break stick (breaking stick, bite stick):

A wedge-shaped stick used to “break” the hold of a pit bull. Can be made of wood or plastic.

Flirtpole:

An exercise device consisting of a pole, often bamboo, with a lure (often animal hide) attached; the dog chases the lure, which is guided by the trainer holding the pole.

Keep:

A rigorous diet and exercise program designed to prepare and condition a dog for a contract match, usually four to six weeks prior to the fight; except for exercise periods, a dog in keep is usually isolated from other dogs.

Spring pole:

A device used for exercising a dog, similar to a flirt pole.

Treadmill / Slatmill / Carpetmill:

A stamina building device for running a dog in place.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you suspect dog 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 **0300 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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The League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1095234) and Scotland (no. SC045533), and is registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee (no. 04037610).