



# Dog Fighting

Advice for the veterinary community



Dog fighting remains a significant animal welfare issue in Britain.

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. Training methods brutalise and fights inflict untold physical and mental suffering on 'man's best friend'.

This advice sheet will help you identify the signs of dog fighting and explains how to raise your concerns. We're appealing to the veterinary community for information to help us raise awareness and tackle this appalling abuse.

## Typical dog fighting injuries

As with other forms of animal abuse, one of the most significant indicators that the animal's injuries result from dog fighting is that they are inconsistent with the explanation provided by the owner; or the account given by the owner changes during the course of the examination.

The most common explanation given is that the injuries result from a 'spontaneous dog fight in the local park'. But closer examination of the dog's injuries may tell a very different story.

### Warning signs

- Multiple puncture wounds in various stages of

healing suggest the injuries have happened over time, on separate occasions.

- Typically wounds are to the head, neck, chest, and forelimbs; the front legs may show bite marks encircling the leg, or degloving injuries.
- Gums may be damaged, missing or badly swollen with bruising and necrotic flesh.
- X-rays may show new, as well as healed fractures.
- Ears and tails may be crudely cropped to prevent the other dog holding onto them.
- Damage to teeth - teeth may be broken, filed or extracted.
- White marks on the fur could indicate scarring underneath - it may be worth shaving the fur to get a better look.
- There may be marks around the neck from a weighted collar that's used to build muscle.
- You may be asked for drugs or medical supplies (such as antibiotics) for animals that haven't been brought into your clinic because their owner wants to patch them up in secret.
- You may see evidence of homemade veterinary treatment such as stitching, use of superglue or antibiotic sprays.
- Owners may offer cash payments or arrange for a third-party to pay the bill to minimise the link between them and the animal you're treating.

Not only do these animals suffer terribly during fights but by the time they've reached you, they may be in very poor condition. Dogs that are repeatedly forced to fight often have multiple puncture wounds, crushing injuries, fractured bones, swellings and infections. They may also suffer from blood loss, dehydration, and shock. Many also have Babesia and/or parvovirus.

## Recording injuries

**Making detailed notes of all injuries is crucial.**

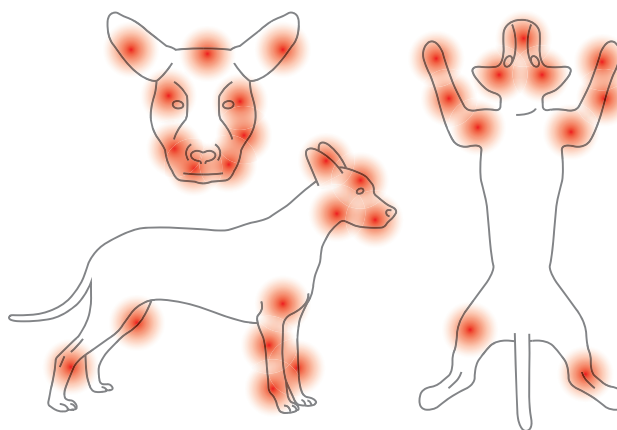
- Scan for a microchip and take good quality overall photographs so the dog can be easily identified.
- Note the extent, nature and position of wounds on the body and take photographs from the front and two sides before administering treatment.
- Complete a separate scar/wound chart for every dog you see, taking photographs of all scars/wounds present.

## Reporting your concerns

It's an offence under section 8 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England and Wales) and the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2006 (Scotland) to force animals to fight. It's an offence to attend, supply, publish or possess a video of a fight. It is also an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal. These offences must be reported to the police.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons provides advice on [how to deal with situations where you suspect animal welfare is compromised](#) and they are clear that public interest in protecting the animal overrides the professional obligation to maintain client confidentiality. If you see clinical signs that cannot be attributed to the history provided by the owner, you should record non-accidental injury in your diagnosis notes. '[Recognising abuse in animals and humans](#)' provides guidance. It's important to record a detailed clinical history as your notes may be used at a later date if a case goes to Court.

Picture 1: Typical wound patterns



Picture 2: Photographs of typical dog fighting injuries



Share your concerns about the animal in your care with your Head of Practice. Once you've decided how to approach it, discuss your concerns with the owner. If your suspicions persist contact the League Against Cruel Sports via our [Animal Crimewatch](#) line on **01483 361 108** or email us at [crimewatch@league.org.uk](mailto:crimewatch@league.org.uk). If you have concerns about your immediate safety contact the police.

The information you provide is strictly confidential. It will be used by us to help raise awareness and by our team of investigators to help bring people to justice.

**Raise your concerns today - help us #EndDogFighting**