



# DOG FIGHTING

Support and advice for law enforcement.

# 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 sophisticated dog fighting rings operating in the UK and worldwide with links to other serious crimes. Strict training regimes and rules apply and large sums of cash are wagered on the outcome of fights that typically last from 30 minutes to two hours.

There is often confusion between dog fighting and protection dogs such as the Cana Corso, Presa Canario and German Shepherds 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 is our opinion this is not necessarily the case. Ear cropping is more associated with status and protection dogs to increase their 'aggressive' appearance.



## 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 is 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.

The League campaigns for a number of changes to ensure that dog fighting is taken seriously as a crime in the UK.

These include:

- 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?

- The League has 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 are 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) (APBT), 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.



## WHERE AND WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

Our analysis of dog fighting convictions spanning some 30 years or more shows there is 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.



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## WHAT INDICATORS SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

- Reports of dogs being aggressive to other dogs
- Reports of Sect 1 American Pitbull Terriers
- Tyres hanging from trees (used for jaw strengthening)
- Reports of Trees/branches which bark chewed off
- Chewed road traffic cones
- Reports of dogs with injuries and scaring 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.

## WHAT MIGHT I FIND 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?

Consider dog fighting as a 'gateway crime'.

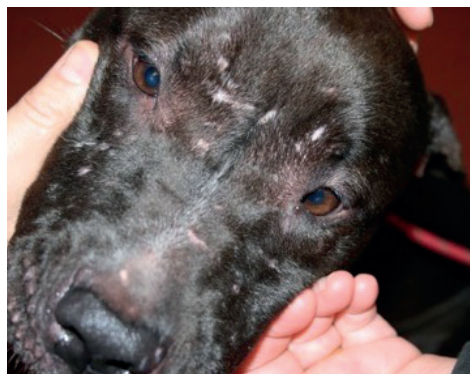
It's our experience, that dog fighting can be a gateway crime linked to violence, Serious and Organised Crime and Money Laundering.

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.



**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.



- 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.



- 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.

Currently the maximum custodial sentence for dog fighting is six months in prison.

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.



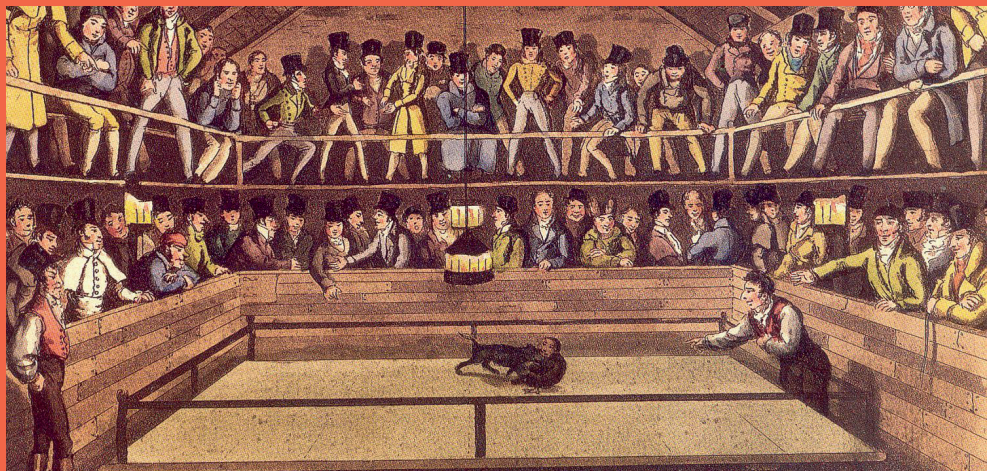


## HOW CAN THE LEAGUE HELP YOU?

We have a dedicated team of staff with a range of law enforcement backgrounds with the knowledge and skills to provide you with any guidance or help should you receive a case of dog fighting.

We also have access to a range of other reports and resources which we may be able to share with you.

We are happy to travel to you and provide a presentation on dog fighting to you and your team.



**League Against Cruel Sports**

New Sparling House, Godalming, GU7 1QZ

**Web:** [www.league.org.uk](http://www.league.org.uk) **Tel:** 01483 524 250 **Email:** [info@league.org.uk](mailto:info@league.org.uk)

League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no.1095234) and Scotland (no.SC045533)



