



The Humane Society of the United States Investigates Cockfighting in Texas

The HSUS has conducted a detailed and comprehensive investigation into the cruel blood sport of cockfighting in the Lone Star State.

It is illegal – a state felony¹ – to fight roosters in Texas, but not illegal to be a spectator at the bloody events, nor to possess roosters for fighting. Spectators routinely pay entrance fees and bet hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars during a cockfight, but they are safe from prosecution. As a result, the incentive to fight roosters is strong – “derby” organizers themselves make hundreds or thousands of dollars in a day, as do the people whose birds win their fights and the bettors who gamble on the right bird’s agility, stamina, and luck.

The roosters are always the losers. Even when a rooster wins he has often been slashed with the razors strapped to his opponent’s leg. Common injuries include punctured lungs, gouged out eyes, broken legs and deep lacerations. If they are lucky losing roosters leave the ring dead but often they cling to life with broken legs and without body parts, discarded in a pile of dead and other injured birds to slowly suffer.

Cockfighting can also attract other criminal elements – drug dealing, prostitution, and gambling – even illegal guns.

In late 2009, The HSUS began its investigation into cockfighting in Texas, attending and documenting almost 20 fights in Angelina, Shelby, Rusk, Smith, Cherokee, Dallas, Atascosa, Liberty, and Henderson counties.

¹ **42.09. Cruelty to Livestock Animals** (a) A person commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly:... (6) causes one livestock animal to fight with another livestock animal or with an animal as defined by Section 42.092; ...An offense under Subsection (a)(1), (5), (6), (7), or (8) is a state jail felony, except that the offense is a felony of the third degree if the person has previously been convicted two times under this section,



Our findings:

- Severely injured roosters repeatedly put in front of their “opponent” to fight when they unable to even stand on their legs
- Live injured roosters thrown in dead piles and pits
- Injured roosters being bashed in the head with sticks
- Injured roosters being tormented by cockfighters
- Small children and teenagers at fights – some betting money
- Gambling – dice tables
- A veterinarian raising roosters and using others to transport them to fights – splitting the winnings with the “handler”

In Pollok, TX, The HSUS investigator filmed the organizer of the fight saying: “Don’t nobody tell nobody else about this fight. We got enough people comin’ – if we get too many, they may shut us down.” The investigator was told that the fight was being protected by a county law enforcement officer who lived next door to the fighting pit location.

In Lytle, TX, the HSUS investigator was told that the huge cockfight taking place there also had law enforcement protection.

On December 18, 2010, the Dallas Police Department and Dallas Animal Services (DAS), along with the HSUS, raided the well-attended cockfights held at a place referred to as La Chimenea due to the still-standing chimney among an otherwise rubble-filled site. As cockfighters tried to run into the woods surrounding the fighting pits, Dallas PD grabbed as many as possible and DAS rounded up approximately 90 roosters who would be spared a fight to their deaths.

The HSUS will work with the Texas Legislature to close major loopholes in the law for both rooster fighters and the spectators that fuel the fire of cruelty.