Courtesy of Respect A Bull, Leslie Hallberg & Michelle Godecke

DOGFIGHTING

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

501 (C) (3) NON-PROFITS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Addressing Dogfighting in Your Community

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ADDRESSING DOGFIGHTING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

During the last ten years, owners of fighting dogs have had to arrange their matches privately, owing to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, whose vigilant officers continually keep under surveillance and prosecute all those who engage in matching and fighting dogs. Nevertheless, a great match is made nearly every week in some section of the country.

— Richard K. Fox. *The Dog Pit or How to Select, Breed, Train and Manage Fighting Dogs, with Points as to Their Care in Health and Disease* (1888)

Dogfighting is a sport which has historically thrived on its ability to convince society that it does not exist. Through surreptitious meetings and hidden locations, the participants in this "sport" have for the most part succeeded in avoiding the attention of both the general public and those agencies whose job it is to combat them. When told about dogfighting, most people express a sincere disbelief that this activity still occurs. Most unfortunately, this attitude is all too often shared by both police departments and, to a lesser extent, humane societies.

It is hoped that by alerting those in positions of public responsibility to the dimensions of this activity and to ways in which they can see evidence of it within their own communities, dogfighting will lose its invisibility and become the subject of effective law enforcement.

— Christopher P. Hoff, General Counsel, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in *Dogfighting in America: A National Overview* (1981)

Introduction

Dogfighting has presented a challenge to law enforcement in America for nearly 150 years. In the quarter century that followed Hoff's remarks, remarkably little changed in the public and professional perception of dogfighting in America. Despite the continuing efforts of animal protection organizations and a handful of law enforcement agencies that actively addressed the crime of dogfighting, the activities remained underground and the participants rarely were held accountable. Laws addressing animal cruelty in general and dogfighting in particular were usually weak and/or poorly enforced.

In the last decade that has begun to change dramatically. Legislators, law enforcement agencies, and the general public have awakened to the reality that crimes against animals do not occur in a vacuum. Animal cruelty and dogfighting often involve participants who have been or will be involved in many other serious crimes, including interpersonal violence. Today, dogfighting is almost inseparable from drugs, illegal weapons, illegal gambling, and many other activities that the public demands be addressed by police. In the last decade, agencies have been given better tools to address these crimes. Dogfighting, once a misdemeanor in many states, can now carry felony penalties in all states and at the federal level. Attending a dogfight is now a serious crime in most states. Animal cruelty, always a component of dogfight enterprises, can also result in felony penalties in nearly every state.

A major factor in raising awareness of dogfighting was the arrest and conviction of NFL quarterback Michael Vick on federal and state charges related to dogfighting in 2007. The worldwide publicity surrounding the activities of this celebrity, as well as other dogfighting cases involving high profile individuals in the sports and entertainment industries, created growing public pressure on law enforcement to respond. The importance of coordinating the skills and resources of many agencies in responding to dogfighting was highlighted in 2009 by the

largest dogfight raid in U.S. history. Nearly 400 dogs were seized during simultaneous operations at more than 20 locations in eight states, resulting in 26 arrests. The raids combined the resources of federal and state law enforcement agencies and local and national animal protection groups.

Another factor that has caused authorities to take a closer look at dogfighting is the recognition that dogfighting and dogfighters have changed in the last two decades. The large scale "professional" fighters investigated by Hoff and his agents in the 1980s still exist, and in some cases have been driven even deeper underground, but the population of "street fighters" has escalated, changing the face of dogfighting from an enterprise that was often rural, remote, and clandestine to one that is increasingly urban, open, and a daily concern to citizens in many communities. It is appropriate, therefore, that we use the tools and techniques that have proven effective in building community oriented responses to other crimes to address dogfighting in America today.

What is Dogfighting?

Every state, and the federal government, has its own definition of the crime of dogfighting, as detailed below. In general, the crime consists of owning, possessing, keeping, or training dogs with the intent to engage in an exhibition of fighting the dog with another animal for amusement or gain, or permit such acts on premises under one's personal control. In most states, dogfighting is a unique offense, separate from cockfighting or other activities involving dogs including bear-baiting, bull-baiting, badger-baiting, or other combat.A Brief History of Dogfighting

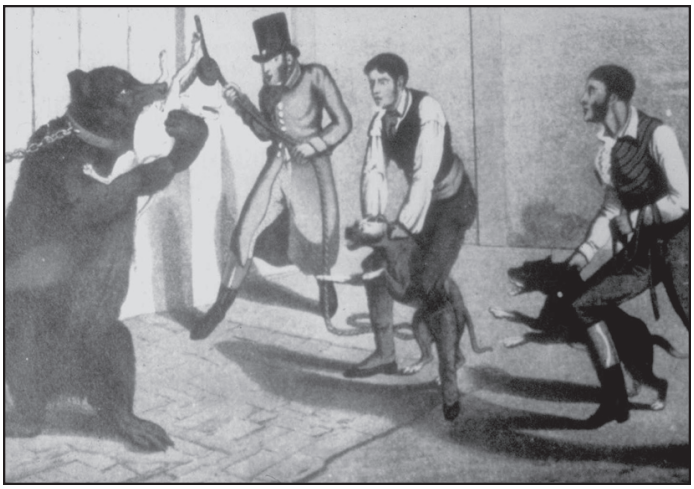
The history of any illegal activity, and the history of any long-established breed, are subject to controversy. Dogfighting and fighting dogs, particularly pit bulls, have an uncertain history that continues to be debated.

The use of dogs against lions, wild boar, bulls, and humans dates back more than 3,000 years. Illustrations of war dogs used by Roman soldiers in 180 AD resemble modern day fighting dogs. Large bulldogs were widely used in the Middle Ages to serve butchers in bringing bulls to market, as well as catching and bringing down animals on command. Bull-baiting as "entertainment" traces its origins to England in the reign of King John (1199–1216). A bull would be chased through village streets by hordes of citizens hoping to witness the kill. Eventually, it would be "baited" by the dogs and killed either by them or by being bludgeoned by local butchers.

Another fashionable pastime was bear-baiting, in which dogs related to the bulldogs were pitted against tethered bears, with prizes and fame awarded to the most persistent or "game" dogs. According to records of these events, the handlers of these dogs often used long sticks to pry the dogs off of the bear, not unlike the use of "breaking sticks" by today's dogfighters.

During Henry VIII's reign (1509–1547) a bear-garden was opened in London, where nearly a thousand spectators at a time paid a penny for admission. Queen Elizabeth I (ruling 1558–1603) was also an enthusiastic fan. She had her own Chief Master of the Bears, who could impound any bear, bull, or dog he wanted to be used in this exhibition. Bear baiting persisted into the early 1800s in England, while bull-baiting continued to be popular for a few more decades. At the same time, the smaller, nimble dogs popular in bear-baiting began to be used more widely in fights against one another. Some historians believe that these smaller fighting dogs were developed by breeding larger bull and bear dogs with smaller terriers used in "ratting" competitions, where dogs were judged by how rapidly they killed rats confined in a pit.

Although dogs of various breeds had been fought against each other for decades, the true beginning of popular dogfighting coincides with the prohibition of bull-baiting in England



under the Humane Act of 1835. That year, London also outlawed dogfighting within a five mile radius, but it remained legal elsewhere. Those who took pleasure in bull and bear-baiting quickly found dogfighting to be a suitable alternative, especially since dogfighting is so adaptable to a surreptitious existence. It is somewhat surprising to note that modern dogfighting rules are, judging by descriptions of early fights, virtually the same as those used from the beginning of the sport's popularity.

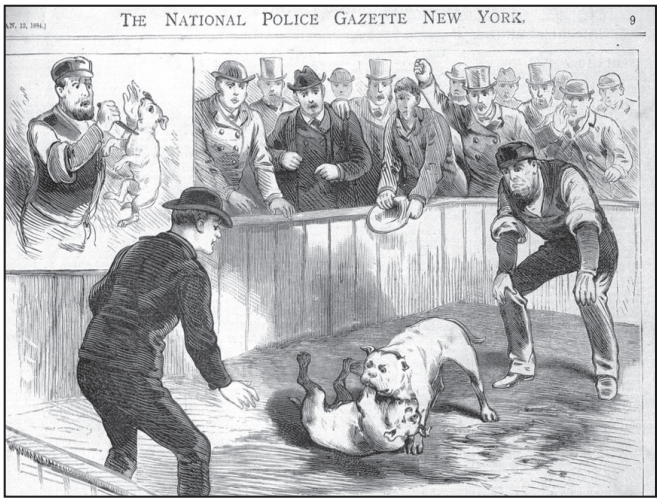
Dogfighting Comes to America

Although there are historical accounts of dogfights involving mastiffs or other larger breeds going back to the 1750s, widespread activity really emerged after the Civil War, with professional pits proliferating in the 1860s, mainly in the Northeast. Many of the animals were brought from England and Ireland, where dogfighting had expanded in the 1830s. Ironically, it was a common entertainment for police officers and firemen, many of them immigrants from England and Ireland. The "Police Gazette," a popular tabloid reporting on crime and police news that was published until 1932, served as a major source of information on dogfighting for many years and published a set of rules for the conduct of dogfights that is still in use today.

One of the most notorious dogfighting operations was Kit Burns' Sportsman's Hall in New York City, scene of dogfights, cockfights, ratting, and other events. In 1868 Burns' establishment was raided by officers of the newly chartered American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®), the first law enforcement action against dogfighters in America. Burns was fined $800, but criminal charges were dismissed. Ultimately Burns leased his property for prayer meetings and dogfighting was driven into secret locations outside of the city. Dogfighting continued to proliferate in several major cities, including Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago.

In 1898 the United Kennel Club (UKC) was established as a registry exclusively for pit bulls, designated "American Pit Bull Terriers" (APBT), to keep track of bloodlines. It established standard rules for fights to reduce feuds and foul play. It eventually began registering a variety of other "working" dogs. Facing pressure from the American Kennel Club (AKC), which has always opposed dogfighting, the UKC finally adopted policies against dogfighting in the 1940s. The AKC refused to recognize the APBT until 1936, when it established conformation standards for what was eventually designated as the American Staffordshire Terrier. Dogfighters and others more concerned about performance than appearance avoided the registry, although some fighters today refer to their dogs as American Staffordshires when seeking to avoid suspicion. An additional registry, the American Dog Breeder's Association (ADBA), was established in 1909 exclusively as a registry for pit bulls in order to preserve the original gameness of the breed, with many of the studbooks provided by breeders of famous fighting dogs. Like UKC, the ADBA adopted a policy statement (2006) that "does not condone or encourage the use of dogs for any illegal activity including dogfighting." They continue to sponsor weight pulling competitions that emphasize strength and stamina.

Although many laws were passed outlawing the activity, dogfighting continued to expand throughout the 20th century. The nation's largest animal protection groups, including the



ASPCA and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) worked closely with police to investigate and prosecute dogfighting, but arrests were relatively infrequent. In the last decade increased attention from law enforcement and animal protection groups has exposed the brutality and extent of dogfighting to a much wider audience, leading to stronger laws at the state and federal level and a growing number of arrests. However, as we shall see, the practice of dogfighting has persisted and changed, with much of the expansion due to the proliferation of smaller scale activities, which are more difficult to investigate and respond to without widespread cooperation of many agencies and community groups.

Why Investigate and Prosecute Dogfighting?

At a time when the resources of law enforcement agencies are often spread thin, some may question the importance of using these resources to respond to dogfighting and other crimes against animals. However, the reasons are clear:

Dogfighting is a Crime

Dogfighting is illegal in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. As of 2009, dogfighting is a felony in all states. In most states, the possession of dogs for the purpose of fighting is also a felony offense. Being a spectator at a dogfight is currently a felony in a growing number of states. Go to www.animallaw.info/articles/armpusanimalfighting.htm for a current state-by-state review of state dogfighting laws.

The federal Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act (2007) provides for felony penalties for interstate commerce, import and export relating to commerce in fighting dogs, fighting cocks, and cock fighting paraphernalia. Each violation can result in up to 3 years in jail and a $250,000 fine.

Dogfighting Can Be a "Gateway Crime"

Many communities report growing involvement of juvenile offenders in dogfighting, often as a part of gang involvement. The sense of power and control gained from having an aggressive dog, as well as the potential financial gain, can lure juveniles into an underground scene that often includes other criminal activities.

Dogfighting is Associated with Many Other Crimes

In addition to the animal cruelty and illegal gambling that are at the core of dogfighting activity, virtually all dogfight raids involve the discovery and seizure of illegal drugs, and about two-thirds result in the seizure of illegal weapons. Such raids often result in the arrest of many offenders with outstanding warrants. Disputes over dogfights have also been associated with serious assaults and several homicides.

Dogfighting Destabilizes Communities

Dogfighting is a classic example of a "broken-window" crime. The evidence of its presence in an area may be very visible, particularly in the case of street fighting, but the difficulty of mounting an effective law enforcement response may create the perception that no one cares about the threats this crime presents to the community. By bringing together community-oriented resources, this crime can often be stopped.

Who is Involved – The People

Just as dogfighting cuts across many regions of the country, participants and spectators at dogfights are a diverse group. While some might typify dogfighting as a symptom of urban decay, not every dogfighter is economically disadvantaged. There are people who promote or participate in dogfighting from every community and background. Audiences and participants have been known to include lawyers, judges, police, and teachers, drawn in by the excitement and thrill of the blood sport.

Although many people associate dogfighting themes and images with "hip-hop" or "rap" culture, this is a relatively recent addition to an enterprise that has been active in America for more than a century and half. Ironically, some of this change is related to attempts to ban pit bulls. Whenever pit bulls are outlawed, the ownership of the breed and association with dogfighting can become an "outlaw" status symbol.

Reasons for Involvement in Dogfighting

There are many reasons people are attracted to dogfighting. The most basic is greed. Major dogfight raids have resulted in seizures of more than $500,000, and it is not unusual for $20,000 – $30,000 to change hands in a single fight. Stud fees and the sale of pups from promising bloodlines can also bring in thousands of dollars. Young participants have often been convinced that they can breed and sell a few fighting dogs and make a lot of money, yet very few succeed. The sales of publications and training tools such as treadmills and other paraphernalia can be an additional source of income. For some, involvement in dogfighting helps define their outlaw status and their rejection of the values of mainstream society—giving them credibility with a community that shares the same values. For others, the attraction lies in using the animals as an extension of themselves to fight their battles for them and demonstrate their strength and prowess. However, when a dog loses, this can cause the owner of the dog to lose not only money, but status, and may lead to brutal actions against the dog. Finally, for many, the appeal simply seems to come from the sadistic enjoyment of a brutal spectacle.

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Dogfighting: A Community Problem

Dogfighting is a serious and violent crime—but it is more than that—it is a *community* problem. A typical week in the life of an area where dogfighting goes on can help to illustrate how dogfighting affects many parts of the community. In the course of the week we might see the following:

- Concerned citizens call 911 to report a noisy gathering in an alley. By the time police arrive they find only beer cans, cigarette butts, and a weak, injured dog. No one on the street in the area claims to have seen anything
- The Sanitation Department reports finding two dead, scarred dogs in a ditch alongside a road
- The Housing Authority reports having to order the removal of several unauthorized dogs being kept at a public housing site after complaints from other residents about attacks on other pets
- Animal Control reports picking up a growing number of loose or abandoned pit bulls, many of them apparently injured
- The police Narcotics Unit reports finding several dogs and dogfighting paraphernalia in the course of investigating a house associated with drug sales
- School resource officers report a rise in incidence of high school students wearing clothing with dogfighting themes and rumors of involvement in fight activity

- Child Protective Services, investigating a report of children at risk, finds a dozen pit bulls chained to dog houses in the yard of a house in a rural area

These apparently isolated incidents add up to a PROBLEM, which demands a problem-oriented solution. Problem Oriented Policing looks upon a problem as the basic element of police work, as opposed to an isolated incident, crime, case, or report. Problems are usually defined as something that concerns or causes harm to citizens, not just as a violation of a law. Successfully addressing problems means more than quick fixes: it means dealing with conditions that create problems.

Problems that affect the entire community are best addressed by approaches that involve the resources of the entire community. A commonly used problem-solving method in police work is the **SARA** model (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment). This Guide will present suggestions for applying these methods to the problem of dogfighting in your community.

Who Will Start the Process?

Recent studies in crime prevention have repeatedly demonstrated that strategic crime-control partnerships with a range of third parties are more effective in disrupting drug problems and other crimes than law enforcement-only approaches.[1] Partnership programs that address specific target populations, such as older adults, have also proven to be effective.[2] The approach that has proven to be effective in a number of communities is to establish a multi-agency Task Force to deal with animal cruelty issues in general or to specifically address dogfighting. A Task Force approach is often what is needed when several conditions are present:

- The problem involves multiple crimes that can be violations of laws at multiple levels—local, state, and federal
- Many different aspects of community life are affected, including public safety, public health, housing, schools, parks, etc.
- Solutions will require the coordinated activity of agencies that may not have shared re sources (e.g., police may have little animal handling experience and no resources for animal housing), and animal control or humane groups usually lack arrest authority.

All of the above conditions are usually found in communities where dogfighting is present.

1. Mazerolle, Lorraine, David W. Soole and Sacha Roombouts. 2007. *Crime Prevention Reviews No. 1: Disrupting Street-Level Drug Markets.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
2. A good example is the establishment of SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together) Councils, as outlined by the National Association of Triads, a program established by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). For more information go to www.sheriffs.org/Triad.asp

The process should begin at the highest possible level of authority to insure the greatest impact and continuity. Successful task forces have been started by Governors, Attorneys General, Mayors, and Chiefs of Police. Local groups have also been organized by animal care and control or humane organizations, with the endorsement of higher authorities.

The objectives of the Task Force should include:

- Providing a setting for direct, regular contact between agencies and a diverse set of stakeholders
- Providing a forum for stakeholders and agencies to understand the competing needs and requirements of the government and the affected communities
- Providing a forum for discussing citizen issues and concerns, thus enabling the development of a more complete and satisfactory solution
- Broadening consideration of issues to include differing values as well as facts;
- Providing a system for generating collaborative responses
- Providing a framework for assessing outcomes and changing direction if necessary

Whoever initiates the process should know there are several key steps in building an effective collaboration:

Step 1 – Identifying the Stakeholders

The first assignment for those responsible for organizing a Task Force should be to determine the groups or individuals who should be invited to participate. Since dogfighting affects so many elements of the community, the list of potential stakeholders is likely to be very large. Attempting to include *all* interested parties in all the activities of the group can be counterproductive. It is not necessary to include all stakeholders in all meetings and decision-making as long as all have an opportunity to voice their interests and concerns and are kept informed about the activities of the group. In general, representatives to the Task Force should be drawn from the highest levels of the agencies or organizations represented to make sure that there is the strongest possible support for the mission of the group.[3] As noted above, this process should be initiated at the highest possible administrative level (Governor, Mayor, Chief of Police) to underscore the importance of the process.

It is useful to structure the Task Force into *Primary Stakeholders*, who will serve as a steering committee for the activities of the group and participate in all meetings, and *Advisory Stakeholders* whose information, opinions, and advice will be integrated into task force planning. The Primary Stakeholders are those agencies or organizations that have direct and frequent exposure to the problem or are responsible for responding to public concerns and reports.

Suggested *Primary Stakeholders* include:

- A representative from the agency that will have the primary authority for the Task Force, such as a representative from the Governor's Office, the Office of Attorney General, the Mayor's Office, City Council or the Chief of Police
- A representative from law enforcement agencies responsible for responding to dogfighting or animal cruelty. Several agencies may be represented—Police Department, Sheriff's Dept., State Police, etc.
- A representative from the local District Attorney's Office as well as the area U.S. Attorney's Office

3. A good introduction to this process is provided in *A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder through Problem Solving Partnerships.* 2006. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

- A representative from Probation, Parole, or Corrections
- A representative from Animal Care and Control or the local Humane Society/SPCA with responsibility for enforcement of cruelty laws and/or enforcement of dangerous dog laws
- A representative from local government (Mayor's Office, City Council, Community Board, etc.) if not already the primary organizer
- A representative from local organizations involved in local crime prevention and response (Crimestoppers, Community Watch, etc.)
- A representative from the Health Department if it has responsibility for tracking dog bite issues in the community
- A representative from the local Housing Authority
- A representative of Code Enforcement
- A representative from the state or local Veterinary Medical Association, particularly if your state mandates veterinarians to report animal abuse or dogfighting
- One or more members from the community at large

It can be useful if the Task Force makes use of an outside facilitator to keep the process moving smoothly. This person may be a representative from a local academic institution who may also identify local university resources to assist in gathering and analyzing data needed by the Task Force as well as assisting in the analysis of outcomes.

Advisory Stakeholders represent agencies or organizations with occasional or peripheral exposure to the problem. They would also include groups that can play an important role in prevention and community education and action. These members should be invited to participate in one or more meetings specifically intended to get their input and should be kept informed about Task Force activities through a regular newsletter, list-serve, or emails.

Suggested *Advisory Stakeholders* include:

- A representative of school resource officers from area schools or a school administrator involved in gang or other problem issues in the schools in the community
- A representative from the Department of Sanitation and/or a representative from the Highway Department who may be aware of reports of disposals of dead dogs from fight situations
- A representative from the Fire Department who may have information on abandoned buildings that have been the scene of gang or dogfighting activity
- A representative of the local Parks Department who may have information on fight activity in public areas and who can also help identify resources for activities that may serve as an alternative to involvement in dogfighting
- A representative from area Social Services (Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services) who may be aware of reports of concerns about animal cruelty or keeping of possible fighting dogs as a result of home visits

Additional Advisory Stakeholders

An additional group of stakeholders should include agencies and individuals that can play an important part in building community awareness of the problem or who can participate in prevention activities aimed at some of the root causes of the problem. These additional stakeholders can include:

- Breed rescue groups that can help implement community programs for responsible pit bull ownership and can advise agencies on meeting any special needs of animals that may be confiscated
- Teachers or Humane Educators involved in violence or animal cruelty prevention programs in the schools
- Community groups involved in outreach to children potentially at risk for involvement in gang or dogfighting activity (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters)
- Community religious leaders involved in anti-violence or anticrime efforts
- Media, particularly those with an established interest in crime prevention and/or animal-related issues

Other members of the community who may provide additional support to the efforts of the Task Force include:

- Representatives of local utilities that should instruct personnel to be alert to signs of dogfighting or animal cruelty on property to which they have access. This would include phone companies, cable TV, gas, power, and water companies.
- Representatives of delivery companies (e.g., U.S. Postal Service, UPS, FedEx) that may also have knowledge of property with possible dogfighting activity
- Local Corporations and Foundations that might be interested in funding local community violence prevention and intervention programs

A final source of input can be a public hearing or information session where members of the public can be given the opportunity to briefly describe any dogfighting, dangerous dog, or animal cruelty issues that have directly affected them or their community. It should be made clear that the Task Force is seeking input only, and that this meeting should not be used as a forum for debate or dialog with Task Force members. Such a meeting should be scheduled after at least two or three regular Task Force meetings have been held to clarify the focus and concerns of the group and the possible recommendations it might make.

Task Force Logistics

Where to Meet

It is advantageous to have Task Force meetings at a single consistent location easily accessible to the stakeholders, such as City Hall, a Court House, or other facility that can accommodate the group. Since some participants may not be able to attend all meetings, it is desirable to have a facility where there can be speaker phones and conference calling capability. There may be advantages to having the meeting place rotate among lead organizations so that representatives can see the resources and facilities of each member, but this can lead to confusion about where the next meeting is to be. It is helpful if at least one meeting is held at the participating animal sheltering organization so that Task Force members can become more familiar with the resources that are available and the possible limitations of those resources.

When to Meet

In the initial stages of formation, the Task Force should meet monthly to work out any early difficulties that might arise. Once programs are underway, it may be sufficient to meet every other month or even quarterly.

Several successful Task Forces have found it convenient to schedule meetings as a working lunch of 90 minutes to 2 hours maximum, with pizza, sandwiches, or other simple food brought in to help establish a spirit of community effort. Other Task Forces have found early evening meetings are less disruptive to the work schedules of participating members, but require a greater time commitment.

Who Pays for Task Force Activity?
The formation of a Task Force need not have significant costs since it will consist mainly of people doing their existing jobs, but in a more cooperative and efficient way. If the group decides to prepare flyers, brochures, posters, or other material, it may be possible to have the costs of these projects covered by local businesses or foundations. Increased action against dogfighting in a community may lead to increased animal care and control costs associated with care and housing of animals that are seized. These costs can be reduced through efforts to use court-ordered bonds. In addition, enforcement costs might be defrayed through asset forfeitures following successful conviction.

Step 2 – Defining the Problem – Scanning

The initial meeting of the Task Force should begin the process of SCANNING. Task Force organizers should first introduce the purpose of the group and review the basic process that will be used to review and analyze the problem, suggest possible responses, and analyze the results. Stakeholders should be introduced and allowed to identify their interest in the issues, the parts of the problem that affect them directly, and the resources they have that are or could be used for a response.

The scanning process begins with a preliminary inquiry to determine if dogfighting is a problem in the community from the perspective of the stakeholders. They should be asked to identify experiences with activities, locations, or individuals that have come to their attention as issues. A useful tool for this process is making use of the **Problem Solving Planner**[4] Scanning Checklist. The group should review the attached checklist, with stakeholders encouraged to take it back to their agency or organization for discussion and to gather additional information available to them for analysis at the next meeting.

Step 3 - Understanding the Problem – Analysis

The second meeting of the Task Force should focus on analysis of the information gathered in the initial scanning and the start of brainstorming possible responses. In the analysis process problems must be described precisely and accurately and broken down into specific aspects. Individuals and groups of people are affected in different ways by a problem and thus will have different ideas about what should be done about the problem.

The analysis should also review the way the problem is currently being handled. The limits of the effectiveness of current approaches must be openly acknowledged in order to come up with suggestions for a better response. As summarized in the **Problem Solving Planner**, the group's analysis should include reviewing the following questions:

- What do we know about the problem?
- Where is it occurring?
- When is it happening?
- Who is involved?
- What kind(s) of dogfighting are taking place in the community?
- How closely is it tied to gang, drug, or other criminal activity?
- Are there other questions we need to answer before moving against the problem? If so, where can we get that information?
- Does the problem need to be redefined in some way?

4. This material is adapted from the *Problem Solving Planner* developed by the Regional Institute for Community Policing, 2930 Montvale Drive, Suite B, Springfield, IL 62704.

If additional information is needed, or if the group wants to solicit direct participation from *Advisory Stakeholders*, it may be advisable to hold a second Analysis meeting to review this additional input. This should be done as quickly as possible so as not to lose momentum.

In preparation for the next critical planning stage, participants should be asked to begin clarifying their view of what should happen next. They should be prepared to discuss:

- What do we want to stop happening?
- What do we want to start happening?
- What do we want to see change?
- What resources and information can we provide to make this happen?

Step 4 – Planning the Course of Action – Response

Once the Task Force has identified the scope of the community problems associated with dogfighting, the stakeholders interested in changing the situation, and the desired changes, it can set goals and proposed methods for reaching those short and long-term objectives. The **Problem Solving Planner** suggests a variety of possible Response Methods that have been used in other communities. The Task Force should review these options and others that might be suggested by the group and prioritize several possible short and long term responses. In discussing these priorities, the group should consider:

- Has a particular response been tried before in the community and with what result?
- What obstacles might exist to the chosen response (institutional, legal, financial, etc.) and how can they be overcome?
- What other problems might be encountered (manpower, equipment, funding, space, interagency communications, community resistance, etc.) and how might they be overcome?
- How rapidly can this response be instituted?
- What measurable changes can be used to assess the effectiveness of the response?

It is unlikely that the resources will exist to implement *all* the suggested responses immediately. The Task Force should focus on those that show the greatest promise for reducing the occurrence of the problem in the community. It may be useful to designate several subcommittees to develop details for the implementation and assessment of different proposed responses. For example, one working group might develop plans for community outreach and communication while a second focuses on issues related to the organizational or policy changes that might be needed to allow for a rapid coordinated response from several agencies when there are reports of dogfighting activity.

Here are some suggested response methods that have been implemented in other communities:

Collaborations with Other Agencies

- Establish memoranda of agreement between police and animal care and control or humane law enforcement to coordinate rapid response to dog fight related calls
- Establish a dedicated hotline for local reporting of dogfighting activity
- Establish and publicize a local reward fund for information leading to dogfighting arrests in collaboration with Crimestoppers or other crime prevention groups

Collaborations with Other Professionals

- Alert members of groups that may come into contact with evidence of dogfighting to increase community concern and action (e.g., veterinarians, Social Services, other municipal services)

Provide Training / Cross Training for Professionals

- Provide training on basics of dogfighting for all police officers using elements of the Guide and the Online course, which is for law enforcement only
- Work with humane groups and breed groups to train police and other potential first responders on safe animal handling
- Train agencies likely to assist in dogfight operations on basics of Incident Command System that will be needed in large-scale responses

Legislative Action

- Work for increased state penalties for participants/organizers involved in dogfighting
- Work for increased penalties for spectators
- Seek legislation granting immunity to reporters of animal cruelty and dogfighting (e.g., veterinary professionals)
- Increase enforcement of animal control laws, licensing, dangerous dog laws

Educate the Community

- Use the media and public awareness materials to educate target communities to problems of dogfighting and increased law enforcement interest
- Take advantage of community events (street fairs, "Night Out," etc.) to educate the community and seek information about local concerns
- Establish partnerships between law enforcement and local humane societies, SPCAs and Animal Care and Control to distribute and solicit information at animal-related events (dog walks, vaccination clinics, spay/neuter events, etc.)
- Address the "No-Snitching" culture that can interfere with effective community-oriented enforcement efforts (see Addressing "Stop Snitching" sidebar on page 18)

Target those Responsible

- Establish a "zero tolerance" approach to incidents of animal abuse and dogfighting
- Treat dogfighting as the serious, violent, major crime that it is. Work with area prosecutors to encourage charges for all crimes (e.g., animal cruelty, drugs, weapons, gambling) occurring in association with dogfighting

Target Locations

- Identify "hot spots" associated with potential dogfight activity and increase surveillance, patrols, and/or community education efforts in these areas

Institute Youth-Oriented Community Prevention

- Establish relationships with humane societies, SPCAs , breed rescue groups, and mentoring groups to support programs that foster positive relations with animals to potentially replace involvement in gang or dogfighting activity (see examples starting on page 19)

Your local Task Force can identify other promising strategies that are appropriate for the interests and resources of your community. Some examples of the activities of existing Task Forces that have proven to be effective are highlighted in the examples starting on page 19.

Step 5 – Evaluating Program Effectiveness – Assessment

After various responses have been devised and implemented, it is essential to assess how well these responses are meeting the desired goals. Some changes may be visible immediately, while others can take longer to have noticeable results.

When to Assess

The assessment of some responses can begin as early as 3–6 months after they have been launched. This may provide enough time to see if there are unforeseen obstacles or unintended consequences that might require changing the plan. A more detailed assessment should be done after 6–12 months. For long-term projects, scheduling an assessment every 6–12 months should be sufficient.

Where to Assess

The original scanning process should have identified potential hot spots of dogfighting activity, as well as areas at risk of becoming a problem. The assessment should look at various measures that are linked to specific areas to see if some techniques are more or less effective in some areas than in others. Certain measures (e.g., extent of media coverage) may apply to the entire community.

How to Assess

The **Problem Solving Planner** suggests several possible methods for assessing change and impact, including community and staff surveys, crime statistics, community response, and calls for service. The specific techniques you choose will depend on the goals you have set and the measurements you have defined.

What to Assess

The planning process will have defined several specific measurable goals. For example—reducing call response time on dogfight complaints, increasing arrests for dogfighting, delivering a certain number of trainings on dogfighting to staff and partners, etc. For each goal, you should attempt to determine if the target was met or not and, if not, what the obstacles might have been and how they might be overcome in the future.

Step 6 – Keeping Things Going

The coordinated response of the Task Force should be an ongoing process, changing strategy and direction as the community itself changes. Should it succeed in its objective to eliminate or significantly reduce animal fighting in the community, it may focus on other issues of animal abuse and neglect.

The Task Force should periodically renew the process we have outlined here, by repeating the SCANNING of the nature of the problems surrounding dogfighting, by REANALYZING the information that is gathered and RESPONDING in a different way if necessary. If successful, the group should document and share its success with other communities so that they can implement similar programs. If the Task Force has not fully achieved its goals, it can reach out beyond the community for suggestions.

Dogfighting has been part of the American scene for more than 150 years. It will not vanish overnight. However, community concern has never been higher and the tools available to law enforcement and other agencies to combat it have never been stronger. In ending this violent crime, we move closer to a truly humane community.

Addressing "Stop-Snitching" (SS) as an Obstacle to Responding to Dogfighting

Although the public is concerned about dogfighting in the community, it is often difficult to follow up on reports of street fighting or other dogfight related activity due to the prevalence of community pressures against cooperation with law enforcement. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has noted, "the stop snitching message impedes investigations, arrests, and convictions and has seriously eroded the justice system in some jurisdictions."†

The phenomenon is not just about attitudes toward police—but a very real fear people have of placing themselves in danger. However, the PERF survey found that threats of violence were more common than actual acts—the majority of agencies reported few isolated instances of actual retribution. We know that dogfighting is itself a violent crime, and that those involved are often linked to other crimes of violence. Since one of the most effective tools against "Stop-Snitching" is identifying violent offenders and getting them off the streets, a crackdown on dogfighting can be an important part of this.

Several communities have instituted successful programs to address SS. These usually involve one or more of the following elements:

1. Involve the community through a Task Force, neighborhood organizations, youth groups, religious groups, crime victim organizations—anyone that can spread the word that the community is taking back the streets.
2. Increase police presence in high crime areas where SS is a problem, without appearing to be an occupying force.
3. Deal with fear of retaliation by facilitating anonymous tips and informing the community of arrests and successful prosecutions of dogfighters, gang members, or others propagating the SS message.

The PERF report highlights several community programs that have been effective in addressing the Stop Snitching issue:

Rochester, NY – launched a *You Bet I Told* campaign originally funded by area churches. The program uses the 311 system to arrange for where and when witnesses can speak confidentially with someone about the crime they witnessed.

Baltimore, MD – produced its own *Keep Talking* video and t-shirts. The video noted the arrest of many of those involved with widely-distributed SS videos.

Philadelphia, PA – distributed *Step Up, Speak Up* brochures about reporting crimes, and instituted a Live Operator Tip Line Service.

Washington, DC – instituted a *Third Watch* anonymous tip line. The city trains volunteers in safe methods of intelligence gathering with a privileged level of confidentiality, modeled on the secrecy already afforded to confidential informants. Each volunteer has a personal handler and is trained separately.

† *The Stop Snitching Phenomenon: Breaking the Code of Silence.* Office of Community Oriented Policing Services/Police Executive Research Forum. February 2009.

Here are a few examples of communities and organizations that have taken a collaborative approach to combating animal cruelty in general and/or dogfighting in particular. Such coalitions are helping protect the health and safety of people and animals alike:

Mayor's Anti-Animal Abuse Task Force Baltimore, Maryland

On May 27, 2009, a young female pit bull terrier was doused with gasoline and set on fire in broad daylight in West Baltimore. A Baltimore City Police Officer observed the burning dog and extinguished the flames with her sweater. The dog, who was subsequently named Phoenix by her caretakers, suffered severe burns over ninety-five percent of her body. Despite extensive veterinary efforts to save her life, Phoenix succumbed to kidney failure and was euthanized. This crime and several others like it in Baltimore sparked a public outcry and attracted national attention.

In response, Mayor Sheila Dixon announced the creation of an Anti-Animal Abuse Task Force and charged the group with making recommendations regarding the following:

- Ways to eradicate animal abuse in the City of Baltimore, including dogfighting
- Methods of increasing awareness of animal cruelty laws
- Legislation to protect animals and prosecute abusers
- Training techniques for law enforcement officials on how to handle animal cruelty cases humanely and to ensure acquisition of the best evidence to prosecute animal abusers
- Steps to foster improved responses to incidents of animal cruelty and
- Methods to improve training for Animal Control Officers for their protection as well as that of the animals

Baltimore briefly had a dogfighting task force formed in 2007 in the aftermath of publicity surrounding the Michael Vick case. Three police officers were assigned to work with animal control to assist in dogfighting investigations. Although this entity was successful in procuring a few convictions for dogfighting and animal cruelty, it was not designed to address the more prevalent issues of street level dogfighting and other animal abuse, nor did it involve a broad cross-section of the community and the officers were eventually reassigned to other duties.

The new Task Force includes representatives from city government, local and national animal protection organizations, the Police Department, the Health Department, Animal Control, the States' Attorney, and citizen's groups. It is an all-volunteer group, with no funding provided by the City.

In its first year of action, the Task Force has met monthly, held public hearings, addressed the need for changes in the use of 911 and 311 systems to report and track animal cruelty

Dogfighting and Animal Cruelty Task Forces

We have noted throughout this Guide that animal cruelty and dogfighting are a growing concern for communities across the country. Along with this increased concern is the recognition that these problems cannot be addressed by law enforcement and animal control alone. Effective solutions to animal-related problems, including dogfighting, require the involvement of representatives from many segments of the community, including the public that may witness and report abuse, police and humane agencies that respond, prosecutors who will hold offenders accountable, and others who recognize the connections between animal cruelty and other forms of violence.

cases, and developed plans to make additional training and information on dogfighting and animal cruelty available to police officers, Neighborhood Watch volunteers, and the general public. It has made many suggestions for needed changes in state and local laws. In 2011 the Baltimore City Council passed legislation elevating the status of the Task Force to a permanent Commission.

South Carolina Anti-Dog Fighting Task Force

This Task Force was organized in 2004 by Attorney General Henry McMaster and Chief Robert Stewart of South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. It is a statewide coalition of law enforcement agencies, state and local government agencies, and local, state, and national animal welfare groups. McMaster and the South Carolina animal cruelty task force emerged as national models of how to respond to dogfighting. Law enforcement officials also unveiled a statewide hot line and billboard advertisement as weapons against dogfighting and other animal cruelty. The telephone hot line number appeared on 10 billboards and featured an image of a dog with a scarred face and missing an eye. In its first three years the South Carolina task force investigations brought in 42 dogfighting arrests. According to McMaster, the major obstacle to even more arrests is the logistical problem of housing the animals that are seized while cases move through the system.

Animal Cruelty Task Force of Southern Arizona (ACT), Tucson, Arizona

In August 1999, Arizona adopted an act amending Arizona Revised Statutes that changed the penalties for those committing animal cruelty from a Class One Misdemeanor to a Class Six Felony. ACT was created to help law enforcement personnel understand and successfully use this new law. Additionally, ACT works as a public information and training organization to raise community awareness and help prevent violent crimes toward animals.

The organization is one of the largest consortiums of local and national agencies united around a common concern about the violence associated with animal cruelty and dogfighting. More than 60 groups are represented, including: Arizona Child Protective Services, Arizona Department of Agriculture, Arizona Department of Game and Fish, Arizona Department of Health Services, Humane Society of Southern Arizona, Tucson City Attorney's Office, Tucson Fire Department, United States Border Patrol, United States District Court, and many local police, sheriff's, and animal control departments.

The group maintains an outstanding website (www.act-az.org/) with extensive resources as well as its own anonymous reporting tip line and links to 88-CRIME. ACT will provide educational presentations to any neighborhood watch, homeowners association, school group, church group, or other organization through the Humane Society of Southern Arizona if Task Force members are available.

Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACTF), City of Los Angeles

The ACTF began in October of 2005, comprised of the Department of Animal Services officers, Los Angeles Police Department detectives, and the Office of the City Attorney. The ACTF is composed of two Lieutenants, two Detectives, five Police Officers II, and five Animal Control Officers. Its mission is to break the connection between animal abuse and human violence and to educate the diverse communities within Los Angeles about the significance of animal cruelty, neglect, and abuse. Deputy Dist. Atty. Deborah Knaan oversees all of the district attorney's prosecutions for animal abuse. A former manager in the city's Department of Animal Services, Knaan offers advice to prosecutors about animal cases and organizes

training programs for prosecutors and police officers on identifying signs of cruelty and neglect. In 2009 the district attorney's office filed animal cruelty charges in 116 cases, nearly 50 percent more than in the previous year.

The ACTF has distributed flyers on animal cruelty in English and Spanish and offers a tip line for information on dogfighting, cockfighting, or extreme cruelty to animals such as beatings and poisonings. The website (www.lapdonline.org/actf) reports on past and current cases.

The Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force (VACTF)

The Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force (VACTF) was created in 2000 to help coordinate the state's response to animal cruelty complaints. This unique collaboration includes Vermont Humane Federation, Vermont Veterinary Medical Association, Vermont Department of Agriculture, Vermont Sheriffs' Association, Vermont Police Chiefs' Association, Humane Society of the United States, and Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

The task force has been successful in creating a vehicle for member agencies to combat animal cruelty by sharing knowledge and resources. Humane societies, rescue groups, animal control officers, and veterinarians provide animal care knowledge, while local, county, and state law enforcement officers offer expertise in criminal procedure. They provide up-to-date information on state laws and investigative procedures consistent with those laws.

The group has been responsible for an innovative Animal Cruelty Reporting System that allows the public to report complaints about animal cruelty by phone or online at www.reportanimalcruelty.com.

The Anti-Animal Fighting Task Force of Monroe County, Rochester, New York

The Anti-Animal Fighting Task Force of Monroe County launched a "We're Looking for a Fight" campaign in 2001, in the form of billboards, bus cards, post cards, and posters to solicit community reports of suspected animal fighting. The Task Force is comprised of professionals from the Monroe County District Attorney's Office; The Rochester Police Department and Rochester Animal Services; Lollypop Farm, the Humane Society of Greater Rochester; The Monroe County Sheriff's Office; City NET; and the City Law Department. They provide an animal cruelty hotline and rewards of up to $3,500 for information that leads to the arrest and/or conviction of individuals involved in animal fighting.

In an effort to better familiarize citizens in the Rochester community with the indicators and types of animal fighting that take place in our area, the Monroe County Anti-Animal Fighting Task Force developed a video that explains the origins of animal fighting, the tools used and the signs that may indicate animal fighting. Ordering information is available at www.lollypop.org.

Animals Subject to Family Violence: Early Detection = Prevention Task Force, Illinois

In Illinois, a coalition of public and private organizations has been assembled to create a strategy to empower the community to recognize that in violent homes animals, children, adults, and the elderly are all potential victims who are entitled to respect, safety, and protection. The *Animals Subject to Family Violence: Early Detection = Prevention Task Force* is engaged in the development of progressive and standardized education and hands-on training about the connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence to social service, animal welfare, and criminal justice professionals as well as members of the community.

This task force is multidisciplinary—no funds are brought to this initiative, only mutual interest and willingness to work together. Member organizations include: the University of Illinois, Institute of Government and Public Affairs Center for Public Safety and Justice; Prevent Child Abuse Illinois; the city of Chicago; Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network; the Office of the Illinois Attorney General; the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils; the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention; Illinois Humane; Safe Passages; the Anti-Cruelty Society (Chicago); Best Friends Animal Society; Cook County Commissioner's Office; the Adler School of Professional Psychology; the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services; and Safe Humane Chicago.

Animal Crimes Unit, Chicago, Illinois

Chicago has always been at the forefront of responding to animal fighting. As early as 1988, the city distributed a publication, Illegal Animal Fighting Guide for Law Enforcement Personnel, to encourage enforcement of existing laws. In early 2007 the Cook County Sheriff's Department formed the Animal Crimes Unit dedicated to stopping dogfighting rings, puppy mills, and other animal cruelty. In August of 2008 the unit was moved to the Organized Crime Division's Gang Investigations Section. This was, in part, in response to data that showed that 60 percent of those arrested for animal crimes during 2000–2004 were admitted gang members and 70 percent had previous drug-related arrests. The Animal Crimes Unit is comprised of officers from the Cook County Sheriff's Police, the Chicago Police Department, and agents from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It maintains partnerships with local and national animal protection groups including the Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends, and Safe Humane Chicago (see below). In 2009 the Unit made 26 felony arrests for dogfighting and other animal cruelty offenses, including busting a dogfighting ring operating out of a suburban daycare home.

Safe Humane Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

The Safe Humane model is an unprecedented community-wide alliance and collaboration of non-traditional partners that has grown over the last decade to encompass a variety of programs striving to create safer, more humane neighborhoods by combating violence and promoting compassion and respect for animals as well as people. Comprehensive programming targets neighborhoods most affected by violence and in need of resources by using schools, churches, and community groups.

Partners in the effort include local government, community and animal advocates, humane organizations, family welfare professionals, faith-based organizations, and other community stakeholders. The growing list includes the Chicago Police Department, the Mayor's Office, Chicago Animal Care and Control, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association, the Chicago Animal Shelter Alliance, and faith-based leaders, among others. Best Friends Animal Society is the national partner.

Among the programs offered by Safe Humane Chicago are:

- Kids, Animals, and Kindness – offered to participating faith-based and community organizations in targeted neighborhoods.

- Youth Leaders for Safe Humane Chicago – a partnership with Chicago Public Schools. High school students work with Safe Humane facilitators and dog handlers to develop the messages of a "safe humane" curriculum for younger children. They traveled with their partners—ambassador dogs approved by Safe Humane Chicago trainers—and their handlers to elementary schools in at-risk neighborhoods.
- The Lifetime Bonds program – focused on older teens under the supervision of juvenile probation officers. They viewed both dogfighting videos and videos of positive interactions with companion animals; participated in sessions with Safe Humane ambassador dogs and their handlers; and learned about laws governing animals in communities.
- Court Advocacy Program – in partnership with the Chicago Police Department. Volunteers attend three scheduled training sessions to become court advocates. They learn about animal laws, their successful prosecution, available remedies, and the fate of the victim animals.

They maintain an excellent website at www.safehumanechicago.org.

Animal Cruelty Task Force, St. Louis, Missouri

The Animal Cruelty Task Force of the Humane Society of Missouri (HSMO) is made up of Professional Humane Officers and Statewide Investigators who conduct investigations of alleged cases of abuse and neglect of animals. Investigators consult with local Sheriffs' Departments and Prosecuting Attorney's to ensure animal cases are handled in an expedient and professional manner. In July of 2009, the Task Force participated in the largest dogfighting raid in U.S. history. Investigators from the Humane Society of Missouri Animal Cruelty Task Force provided the information that led to the investigation.

The HSMO worked in cooperation with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the United States Department of Agriculture's Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshals Service, the United States Attorney, The ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, and other groups. They coordinated the rescue and sheltering of dogs associated with suspected organized dog fighting operations in eight states, resulting in the seizure of nearly 500 dogs and over 20 arrests. This operation showed what can be accomplished through painstaking planning and collaboration between federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations and local and national animal protection groups.

www.hsmo.org/m_animalabuse/rescues.php

Attorney General's Animal Cruelty Task Force, New Mexico

Under the leadership of Attorney General Gary King, the Attorney General's Animal Cruelty Task Force was created in June 2007 to ensure that New Mexico's newly enacted cockfighting law and other animal cruelty laws would be enforced. The Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACT) has 40 members, including the heads of every major law enforcement agency in the state, the District Attorneys Association, cruelty investigators, and experts in the field, as well as federal agencies, animal control agencies, a forensic veterinarian, and animal shelters.

Since its inception the task force has conducted more than 25 raids on animal fighting and animal abuse situations. In the process, the ACT has stopped many operations in narcotics and illegal firearms trafficking, illegal gambling and alcohol sales, violent felons, and the endangerment of minors. The ACT has also trained more than 300 law enforcement officers in the investigations of animal fighting and cruelty investigations. In 2009 the ACT was involved in the investigation and prosecution of the first dogfighting case in the state's history, which resulted in the state's first felony dogfighting conviction since the passage of the dogfighting law in 1981.

New Hampshire Animal Fighting Task Force

The New Hampshire Animal Fighting Task Force (NHAFTF) is a statewide coalition of law enforcement officers, humane investigators, animal care and control professionals, veterinarians, and others. The Task Force offers workshops that are available to law enforcement officials and humane investigators who are interested in learning how to investigate and prosecute animal fighting cases. The Task Force currently has representatives from more than a dozen city Police Departments, the Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire, several local humane societies and SPCA's, the New Hampshire SPCA, the New England Animal Control/Humane Academy, The Humane Society of the United States' New England Regional Office, and the USDA Office of Inspector General.

PROBLEM SOLVING PLANNER FOR A DOGFIGHTING TASK FORCE

Scanning

1. **Scanning methods:** What sources of information do you have available to you to help define the nature of the problem from your perspective? (Check one or more)

- ☐ Calls for Service
- ☐ Anecdotal Evidence
- ☐ Calls from Other Agencies
- ☐ Surveys/Questionnaires
- ☐ Media Reports
- ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Calls from Government
- ☐ Suspect Interviews
- ☐ Arrests
- ☐ Citations
- ☐ Community Meetings
- ☐ Staff Meetings
- ☐ Direct Observation
- ☐ Committee Meetings
- ☐ Other: _____

In your own words, describe the problem in detail.

_____

_____

_____

2. **Nature of the problem:** Which of the following elements have you seen as part of the problem? (Check one or more)

- ☐ 911 Calls
- ☐ Abandoned Buildings
- ☐ Alcohol Related Crimes
- ☐ Injured Animals
- ☐ Abandoned Animals
- ☐ Dangerous Dogs/Animal bites
- ☐ Assaults
- ☐ Breaking/Entering
- ☐ Non-emergency Calls for Service
- ☐ Child Abuse
- ☐ Code/Zone Violations
- ☐ Community Dissatisfaction
- ☐ Disturbances
- ☐ Domestic Violence
- ☐ Drugs/Narcotics
- ☐ Gangs
- ☐ Gambling
- ☐ Graffiti
- ☐ Health Hazards
- ☐ Homicide
- ☐ Juvenile Offenses
- ☐ Larceny/Theft
- ☐ Littering
- ☐ Loitering
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Threats/Intimidation
- ☐ Sexual Assault
- ☐ Trespassing
- ☐ Truancy
- ☐ Vandalism
- ☐ Weapons Violations
- ☐ Other: _____

3. Location of the problem: Where does the problem occur? (Check one or more)

- ☐ Entertainment Facility
- ☐ Neighborhood
- ☐ Housing Development
- ☐ Parking Lot
- ☐ Private Property
- ☐ Private Residence
- ☐ Park/Recreation Area
- ☐ Bar/Club
- ☐ School
- ☐ Shopping Center
- ☐ Street/Alley
- ☐ Trailer Park
- ☐ Vacant Building
- ☐ Warehouse
- ☐ Wooded Area/Field
- ☐ Farm
- ☐ Other: _____

4. Timing of the problem: When does the problem occur? (Check one or more)

- ☐ Weekdays
- ☐ Weekends
- ☐ Any Day
- ☐ Morning
- ☐ Afternoon
- ☐ Evening
- ☐ Late Night
- ☐ Other: _____

Analysis

1. Who is affected and in what numbers?
   - People – number of complainants, 911 callers, reports from businesses, related reports from other agencies (e.g., dangerous dog or bite reports)
   - Animals – number of cruelty complaints, investigations, animals impounded with evidence of fighting, etc.
   - Offenders – number of suspects; percentage of youth, adolescent, adult; number associated with other arrests (drugs, weapons)
2. Where is the problem occurring?

   Public vs. private property. How do these locations relate to areas with high incidence of other crimes? What resources are currently deployed in these areas?
3. When is the problem occurring?

   How long has it been going on? How long does the problem go on when it occurs? Is it getting worse?

Response

Response Method: Describe the types of response methods to be used to address the problem.

Response Method	Strategies	Resources/Partners
Collaborations with other agencies		
Collaborations with other professionals		
Provide Training / Cross Training for Professionals		
Mobilize Other Professionals		
Changes in Local Ordinances and/or State Laws		
Educate Community about the Problem		
Mobilize the Community to Respond		
Target those Responsible		
Target Affected Locations		
Institute Community Prevention		
Other		

Assessment

Assessment Method: Check one or more:

- ☐ Crime Analysis
- ☐ Before/After Analysis
- ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Citations
- ☐ Staff Meetings
- ☐ Anecdotal Evidence/Case Histories
- ☐ Committee Meetings
- ☐ Resident Satisfaction
- ☐ Stakeholder Surveys/Data
- ☐ Other _____

Time Period for Evaluation:

- ☐ 2–3 Months
- ☐ 3–6 Months
- ☐ 6–12 Months
- ☐ 1–2 Years

Goals: Were specific goals accomplished during the assessment period?

Goal	Reached? (Yes/No/Partially)

Changes: What should be done differently in the future?

_____

_____

_____

DOGFIGHTING FAQ FOR ANIMAL SHELTERS

What will be the role of the shelter or humane society in a dogfight investigation or raid?

If your organization has enforcement authority for animal cruelty laws, it will likely be the lead animal organization in assisting local, state, or federal authorities in any actions against suspected dogfighters. Ideally, these responsibilities will have been clearly identified in advance through participation in a local task force or through participation in the planning of the operation and the establishment of an Incident Command Structure.

Animal control officers usually have significantly more experience in handling potentially dangerous dogs than regular law enforcement, including K9 officers, so they should have responsibility for safe and humane capture and transport of any dogs that are to be seized. Shelter veterinarians may have responsibility for on-site triage and emergency veterinary care, as well as the documentation of the health of animals that are removed (see **FAQ for Veterinarians**).

If space and circumstances permit, the local shelter may have responsibility for housing animals until their disposition can be determined by court proceedings. If many dogs are involved, the shelter may have responsibility for providing care at a temporary facility (warehouse, fairground, etc.) established by law enforcement.

What preparations or precautions should be made for housing seized fighting dogs?

The safety and security of people and animals should be the first concern in housing seized fighting dogs. Animals with a fighting history often have great value for illegal purposes and they are potential targets for theft by their owners or others seeking to have such animals. Many shelters that have housed such animals have been the target of attempted break-ins.

Any facility housing seized fighting animals should have a secure perimeter fence, multiple security cameras, and 24-hour security. If it is not possible to have someone on-site at all times, the facility should be alarmed and a request should be made for increased police patrols as long as the seized animals are being housed.

Seized animals should be housed in an isolated area, not accessible to the general public. This is necessary both for security and for the control of disease that might be associated with seized dogs. The number of staff caring for the animals should be limited, with all personnel working in the area required to display photo ID. If possible, access to the area

should be by key-card or some other system that records who has entered the facility. Any authorized visitors should be logged in and out. Make note of specific requests from the public asking to see dogs involved in seizures. Remember that suspects in dogfight cases are often free on bail soon after a raid and may make efforts to regain their animals.

In addition to identifying collars, all seized animals should be micro-chipped if possible. Cage cards and other identifying material should be attached in such a way that the dogs cannot damage them.

Fighting dogs can be powerful and destructive. If possible, walls of the cages should be cinder block or cement. Cages should have wire roofs. The doors should be sturdy with hinges and locks in good condition. Doors should be double locked. Dogs should be housed individually and there should be no opportunity for them to get at one another through adjoining cages. They should be prevented from line-of-sight with other dogs by obstructing their view with sheet metal, plywood, or canvas as needed. Any damage to cages that might compromise safety or security should be reported to the appropriate staff immediately.

What are the potential risks to staff?

Although most fighting dogs show little or no aggression to people, they may be highly aggressive to other animals and can cause injuries to people in attempt to get at other dogs. Any feeding, handling, or care should always be done with at least two people present. Until and unless the dog has been shown to be reliably handled on a lead, any handling should make use of a control stick. In all cases, extreme caution should be exercised when moving fighting dogs in the presence of other dogs.

The kennel area should also have a first aid kit and tools for dealing with the possibility of an attack. Some shelters keep a breaking stick handy, such as is used by dogfighters to separate animals in a fight. Fire extinguishers and pepper spray can be effective in stopping an attack in extreme emergencies. It is desirable for the housing area to have internal alarms that can be activated in an emergency since calls for assistance might not be heard over barking.

What other special needs do seized fighting dogs have?

As noted in the **FAQ for Veterinarians**, fighting dogs are subject to a higher incidence of certain parasites and infectious diseases as a result of poor husbandry and the stresses associated with fighting. Care should be taken to prevent exposing other shelter animals to these problems. The protocol outlined in the **FAQ for Veterinarians** should be followed as animals are received.

In general, fighting dogs do not require any special diet while in custody. However, those that were accustomed to a heavy exercise regimen may be prone to gain weight with less activity. Confiscated fighting dogs frequently destroy conventional metal food bowls. They should be fed from cardboard containers. Likewise, they may be more likely to destroy resting platforms or conventional bedding. They should be provided with towels as resting, bedding material.

These dogs may be prone to boredom in the shelter, which can increase destructiveness and other problem behaviors. They should be provided with heavy duty toys or diversions, including large size Kong® toys, bowling balls, or other indestructible play items. Dogs that can be safely walked on a lead should be given opportunities for exercise outside of their pen, with care not to allow access to other dogs or the public.

How long will the dogs likely need to be held?

That is dependent upon court proceedings. If the owner has surrendered the dogs or if they have been declared abandoned (i.e., no one claimed ownership at the time they were seized), then the court may grant the shelter authority to decide on the appropriate disposition soon after seizure. If they have not been surrendered they may be considered evidence and the defense may delay proceedings as long as possible. Holds of 60–90 days are typical, but much longer periods are not unusual. Some courts are reluctant to release dogs to the shelter or other agency until a suspect has been convicted, which can take a year or more from the initial arrest. Other court actions such as custody or bond hearings can help avoid unnecessary delays that potentially hurt the animals, the sheltering agency, and the community.

What is it likely to cost the shelter to house seized fighting dogs?

That of course depends on how many dogs and how long you will be expected to hold them. The actual costs will not be much different from those involved in housing other animals in your care unless you have to make major modifications to the facility for the sake of safety and security or have overtime costs associated with the care. A typical raid may result in the seizure of 2–25 animals, but this can vary widely. Shelters that have housed such animals generally report expenses on the order of $10–$20 per day per animal, plus any veterinary expenses associated with vaccinations or special care. The greater cost to the shelter is the loss of the use of those kennels for the duration of the hold period, which can impact the ability to house potentially adoptable animals. This is one reason why it is desirable to plan for a secondary, secure, off-site location for the temporary housing of such animals if at all possible.

Who pays for the care and housing of the animals that are held?

Many states have provisions in their animal cruelty or dogfighting laws that require or allow for the posting of a bond for the care of animals that are the subject of a case. Such laws are intended to protect the sheltering agency from excessive costs, as well as to protect the owner from unnecessary destruction or disposal of "property" in the event of an acquittal. Usually such bonds are for reasonable costs of care per animal, payable 30 days in advance. If such provisions are not available, it is reasonable for the prosecutor to request a disposition hearing within 30 days of seizure that could request surrender of the animals to the shelter or the payment of such funds in advance as part of a suspect's bond.

What is the effect of such housing on seized animals?

Dogs seized in dogfight raids are individuals who might respond very differently to shelter confinement. Some respond to exercise and proper care by becoming well-socialized to a variety of people and even other animals. Others remain stressed and highly aroused by proximity to other dogs and begin to deteriorate physically and behaviorally. In general, the less time the animals spend in the kind of isolation needed to hold them as evidence the better. The medical and behavioral evidence that might support allegations that a dog has been used in fighting can usually be determined in the first week or two of confinement. Usually a determination of whether a dog can be considered a candidate for rehabilitation can be made within 30–60 days. Longer hold periods put unnecessary burdens on the shelter and on the animals.

What is likely to be the final disposition of seized fighting dogs?

In the past, nearly all dogs seized in dogfighting raids were euthanized. Some state laws consider fighting dogs to be contraband and require their euthanasia. The successful placement of many of the dogs seized in the dogfighting case involving NFL star Michael Vick has drawn attention to the need to view such animals as victims and as individuals and greater efforts have been made to evaluate and rehabilitate seized dogs. Few shelters have the resources to responsibly evaluate, rehabilitate, and place more than a few animals from such circumstances. They often do not have adequate resources to try to place pit bulls already in the shelter that do not have a known fighting history. However, there has been growing public pressure to make reasonable effort to try to assess animals when possible. Since 2008 several shelters that received fighting dogs have been able to conduct such evaluations and work with local and national breed rescue groups to place significant numbers of animals. Efforts to assess and rehabilitate such dogs serve to reinforce the fact that the dogs are victims and, like other victims of abuse handled by the shelter, are deserving of extra effort. If euthanasia is considered to be the only humane solution for many of the animals that were seized, the blame must be focused on the dogfighters who created the problem and not the shelters and law enforcement agencies that are attempting to respond to it.

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DOGFIGHTING FAQ FOR VETERINARIANS

What is my legal responsibility to report suspected dogfighting?

The American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Animal Hospital Association both recognize the importance of responding to suspicions of client involvement in animal cruelty. Several states specifically mandate that veterinarians report suspicions of animal fighting, and others mandate reporting of suspicions of general animal cruelty. Roughly half of the states provide immunity for good faith reporting of suspected abuse. Check with your state VMA for the current status of such regulations in your area. Even without a legal mandate to report, veterinarians who knowingly assist clients that are suspected of dogfighting activity may be subject to criminal charges as accessories if they fail to report.

What is considered grounds for such suspicion?

As with other forms of animal abuse, the most significant indicator that an animal's condition may be the result of dogfighting is that its injuries are inconsistent with the account provided by the owner, or that the account given by the owner changes in the course of the examination. Some warning signs that you may be dealing with a dogfighting client:

- Fighting dogs usually show signs of multiple puncture wounds in various stages of healing—suggesting several separate events. These wounds are often most common on the face, chest, and forelimbs. The front legs may show bite marks encircling the leg, or degloving injuries. Radiographs may reveal recent as well as healed fractures. All wounds should be photographed at mid-range (showing position on the body) and in close-up. Wounds encircling the legs should be photographed in their entirety.
- The most common explanations dogfighters give for injuries to their dogs are that the wounds are the result of a "yard accident" in which the dog got into a single fight with another dog, or that the injuries were the result of an attack by a wild boar during a pig hunt. Make note of observations that would be inconsistent with such accounts, e.g., evidence of multiple stages of healing, unusual location of injuries, wounds inconsistent with laceration and slashing injuries from tusks of a boar.
- Fighting dogs may have had ears and/or tails cropped by the owner or someone else who did not use proper tools and procedures. Make note of croppings and dockings that are irregular, infected, or otherwise suspicious. Dogs may also have had teeth filed down or extracted. This is sometimes done to females to prevent injuries to males during breeding, or to dogs used as bait animals to minimize injuries to fighting dogs during training.

- Fighting dogs may have abrasions or even embedded collars or chains as a result of prolonged chaining to keep them from having access to other fighting animals on the property.
- Dogfighters may request drugs or medical supplies for animals that have not been brought to the clinic, potentially for use in treating other fighting animals.
- Fighters may offer cash payment or arrange for third party payment so there is less of a paper trail linking them to the care provided.

How should I make a report of suspected dogfighting?

It is not your role to investigate possible illegal activity or to confront the suspect. Report your suspicions to law enforcement or the animal control agency with jurisdiction to handle these types of crimes. If you are concerned for the immediate safety of yourself, your staff, or others, dial 911 while the animal is separated from the owner for examination and request immediate assistance.

Remember that everything you do, write, and say is likely to be disclosed to law enforcement authorities and to the accused (who may be your client). If you are called to testify under oath or to give a statement, you may be asked about anything you have documented. Be objective, honest, and thorough.

If possible have another veterinarian (or witness) document their observations and assessments. Document what the client tells you when explaining the animal's condition. Document to whom you reported and when. Although agencies may accept anonymous calls, it is likely that your testimony will be essential to any legal action that might be taken against a dogfighting suspect and you should not expect to remain anonymous.

The best time to discuss the reporting of possible cases of animal cruelty with your staff is before it becomes necessary. You should have a standard operating procedure in place for such events that you have reviewed with all staff who may encounter evidence of cruelty.

I have been asked to assist law enforcement in a dogfight raid/rescue. What will be my responsibility?

If you are asked to assist police or humane law enforcement in an investigation of dogfighting, you may have several responsibilities. A primary role may be to assist in the assessment and emergency treatment of animals rescued from the scene. In addition to a general health check, with blood work and fecal examination, you should carefully document and photograph any injuries and scars, and make a notation of such injuries on the scar chart included in this toolkit. All animals should be scanned for microchips and examined for tattoos, particularly animals that might have been stolen to be used as bait dogs. Law enforcement may also request collection of samples that can be used to screen for anabolic steroids, stimulants, and other drugs commonly used in fighting dogs. You may also be asked to perform a necropsy on any deceased dogs or to examine remains that may have been buried or otherwise disposed of at the scene.

If you are required to house injured dogs during their recovery, special precautions should be taken for security and to insure that the dogs do not have access to other animals (see **FAQ for Animal Shelters**).

Are fighting dogs difficult or dangerous to examine or treat?

Most veterinarians who have been involved in the care and treatment of fighting dogs comment on the ease with which they can be handled. Most fighting dogs have been selected for a low level of aggression to people, since they must tolerate the presence of handlers and referees even under the harsh conditions of the fighting pit. They often have a high pain tolerance, and thus can be easier to handle when injured. However, many fighting dogs have a low threshold for aggression to other dogs, and should be kept isolated from any other animals.

What special protocols should be followed upon intake of dogs seized in connection with dogfighting?

Veterinarians caring for fighting dogs have two responsibilities. They must deal with the animals' medical needs and must also gather information that may become evidence in a criminal proceeding. The extent of care that can be rendered will be affected by the number of animals seized and available staff and other resources.

A separate scar/wound chart should be completed for each dog and photographs of all scars/wounds should be taken. Attention should be given to dental condition, since some fighting dogs may have teeth filed or extracted. A buccal swab should be taken of each examined dog. This can prove useful in using DNA evidence in linking together animals seized from various locations.

There should be full blood work done on all adult animals (6 mos and older) regardless of health status determination, and full blood work on all sick/thin animals regardless of age, unless exam findings determine blood work unnecessary. Recommended tests to run include: complete blood count (CBC); complete blood chemistries including thyroid screening; Heartworm antigen; urinalysis; fecal tests for ova and parasites using zinc sulfate; Giardia Elisa; Parvo Canine Antigen, and Babesia.

Basic treatments will include ectoparasite treatment, deworming, wound treatment, antibiotics, eye medications, SQ fluids, ear cleaning and treatment, shaving of matted fur and/or bathing if needed for medical reasons. Dogs that are to be held for any length of time should receive preventive vaccinations for distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, and parvovirus to boost their immune system. They may be unvaccinated or may have been vaccinated incorrectly or with improper or expired vaccines.

The initial determination to treat or euthanize will be based on veterinary assessment. For any circumstances where the decision is unclear, the final decision will be made by the acting Medical Veterinarian in Charge associated with the investigation or rescue. Euthanasia can only be performed by the appropriate person as per the State Veterinary Practice Act. All euthanized animals, dead animals on-scene, or animals that later die should be held for necropsy.

What kind of injuries or illnesses should I expect to see in fighting dogs?

Dogs that have been recently fought may have multiple puncture wounds, crushing injuries, and fractured bones. Recently fought dogs may show elevated CPK as a result of the extreme exercise and stress. They may also suffer from blood loss, dehydration, and shock. Fighting dogs have been reported to have a high incidence of Babesia (B. gibsoni and B. canis). They are highly susceptible to parvovirus as well. Veterinary reports from examination of many

fighting dogs also indicate many parasites are common, including heartworms, tapeworms, hookworms, roundworms, tapeworms, coccidia, giardia, and demodectic mange. In addition, these dogs may have acral lick granulomas, pyodermas, pressure sores, and ACL ruptures. The examination should include full-body radiographs, which may also reveal embedded bullets. Necropsy of deceased animals may reveal widespread internal injuries, penetrating wounds (including to the skull), deep scoring of leg bones, and other indications of severe fight wounds. Entomological evidence may help determine time since death or age of injuries in a living animal. All of these conditions should be carefully recorded with the expectation that they may become significant evidence.

What will be my role in court?

Veterinarians usually play two roles in the prosecution of a dogfighting case. As material witnesses, they report on what that saw, heard, smelled, and touched in the course of their work on the scene or with the animals. They will report on any tests that were run and other clinical findings. They may also serve as expert witnesses, offering informed scientific opinions as to the plausibility of alternative explanations of the animals' injuries and opinion on the degree of pain and suffering to which the animals were subjected. It is usually the attending veterinarian who plays the primary role of communicating to the judge or jury the story of an animal that may have suffered or died.

Should I expect to be paid for my work on such cases?

Although many veterinarians donate their services in responding to animal cruelty cases, it is reasonable to expect compensation for the time you spend working on such cases or testifying in court, just like any other medical expert. Usually a reasonable compensation is what it would cost to have a relief veterinarian cover your duties while you are away from your practice. Costs associated with care, treatment, and housing of animals should be worked out in advance with the law enforcement or animal care and control agency handling the case. Reimbursements from the defendant for care and treatment of animals may be ordered by the court as restitution upon conviction. Often the community is generous in making donations to the local humane society, animal control agency, or veterinary clinic to specifically cover expenses associated with a cruelty case.

Should I be concerned for the safety of myself and my staff if I am involved in assisting in the prosecution of dogfighters?

Dogfighting is a violent criminal enterprise, but incidents of harassment or threats against veterinarians involved in these cases are very rare. Any inappropriate communication or contact from the suspect, his family, or associates should be reported to the prosecutor and/or police.

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GLOSSARY

Dogfighting Terms and Paraphernalia

Above: a "Treadmill" and a "Rape Stand."

Barrels: Barrels or drums of plastic, or occasionally metal, are often used as shelter for fighting dogs. Placed horizontally, a hole is cut out from one side for the dog to enter and exit. Such housing might not meet state or local standards for required shelter if it does not provide adequate protection from the elements.

Chains: Chains of varying length and weight serve a dual purpose; to confine a dog as well as to strengthen their neck muscles. Chains are sometimes attached to buried car axels or other heavy materials to hold dogs in place.

Bite stick (also known as breaking, parting, or prying stick): These come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but are usually wooden sticks inserted into the side of a dog's mouth, and then manipulated to make a dog release its hold on whatever it's biting.

Cat mill or Jenny: This resembles a miniature horse walker, in which the dog is harnessed to a projecting spoke. A small bait animal is attached to the leading spoke to entice the dog. A variation is a single projecting pole, to which the dog is harnessed.

Culling: The process of removing animals from a breeding group of dogs. Usually culling involves killing the unwanted animals by gunshot or drowning.

Dogmen: Professional dogfighting trainers or handlers or other deeply committed participants in dogfighting.

Flirt pole: A long pole (usually wood, bamboo, or plastic) with a hide or fur lure attached, which is moved around by a trainer to exercise a dog.

Keep: The period of diet, exercise, and conditioning a fighting dog undergoes prior to an organized fight. It typically lasts about six weeks.

Pit: The main area where a fight is conducted, usually 14 to 16 feet square, up to 20 feet. Sides are usually 2 to 3 feet high. The pit may be constructed of plywood, chain link, hay bales, sheet metal, concrete blocks, or other materials. The floor may be carpeted, covered with canvas, or just dirt. Pits are usually designed to be easily disassembled and may be concealed when not in use.

Rape stand or "breeding stand": This is a stand used to strap and immobilize female dogs for breeding purposes.

Roll: A fight during the initial stages of a fighting dog's testing and training. These short fights generally begin between 16 and 20 months of age. A series of rolls allow the owner/breeder to assess a dog's gameness, stamina, and fighting style. Such rolls are considered part of the dogs schooling prior to contract matches.

Scales: Used to weigh dogs during training and prior to a fight to make sure that the dogs are at the agreed upon weight for competition.

Scratch Line: A line drawn in each corner of the pit that opposing dogs must cross to initiate or continue a fight. A dog which will not cross the line fails to "scratch."

Slatmill: A type of treadmill whose running surface is composed of wooden slats.

Spring Pole: Usually consists of a rope, hide, inner tubing, or tire suspended from a strong spring attached to a tree limb, rafter, or pole. It is used to strengthen a dog's bite and neck and leg muscles as he pulls or, in some cases, hangs from the end.

Treadmill: A device used to exercise the dog. It may be a modified electric exercise treadmill used by people. Variations of treadmills can have a flooring of wooden slats (slatmill) or carpeting (carpet mill).

Washtub: Dogs are washed down in tubs immediately prior to fighting, to ensure they have not been coated with a noxious substance that may be harmful to the opposing dog.

Weights: Weights are used for strength training as well, and can be attached directly to the dog's collar. They can also be attached to chains, increasing the weight that the dog has to drag when it moves.

Notes

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