

IO NON COMBATTO

Citizen's guide to recognizing the signs and reporting dogfighting

Dogfighting is a brutal and bloody practice that puts dogs in competition with each other in rings or pits for the entertainment of spectators and is often connected to gambling and other illegal activity.

This cruelty is still extremely widespread in Italy, even though lawmakers banned it many years ago and it is strongly contested by public opinion.



Humane World
for Animals.



Humane World for Animals and Fondazione Cave Canem, through the project "Io non combatto," are working to help provide the necessary tools for fighting this public suffering to law enforcement officials and key professional figures, such as veterinarians and dog trainers, as well as to educate the general population to recognize and effectively report it.

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Dogfighting: what the law says

Animal fighting is a criminal offense under Article 544-quinquies of the Italian Criminal Code:

“Anyone who promotes, organizes, or directs fights or unauthorized competitions between animals that may endanger their physical integrity shall be punished with imprisonment from two to four years and a fine ranging from €50,000 to €160,000. The sentence is increased by one third to one half:

- 1) if these activities are carried out in the presence of minors or by armed persons;**
- 2) if such activities are promoted using video recordings or any type of material containing scenes or images of the fights or competitions;**
- 3) if the offender records or films the fights or competitions in any form.**

Anyone who raises or trains animals for the purpose of involving them—either directly or through third parties—in the fights described in the first paragraph, without participating in the offense, shall be punished with imprisonment for a duration of three months to two years, and may also face a fine ranging from €5,000 to €30,000. The same penalties apply to the owners or guardians of the animals used in such fights or competitions, if aware and consenting, and to anyone who participates in any way in the fights or competitions described in the first paragraph. Anyone who organizes or places bets on the fights or competitions mentioned in the first paragraph, even if they are not present at the scene of the crime and are not an accomplice, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of three months to two years. Additionally, a fine ranging from €5,000 to €30,000 may be imposed.”

Therefore, the law strictly punishes those who organize, promote or direct animal fights or competitions that may endanger the animals' physical well-being.

Moreover, responsibility is not limited to the event organizers. It also applies to:

- those who raise or train animals to take part in fights, even through third parties;
- the owners or guardians of the animals involved, if aware and consenting;
- anyone who participates in the fights or competitions in any capacity;
- those who place bets on these events, even remotely or without being physically present;
- those who record or disseminate images or videos of such activities;
- those who promote or organize these events together with minors or while carrying weapons.

Sanctions include imprisonment (up to four years in the most serious cases) and very high fines, which can exceed €150,000.

Reporting dogfighting

In the course of your daily work or private activities, you may notice signs of dogfighting in your community. In such a case, you can report the fact to any police force unit. Since it is a crime, they are, by law, all competent to investigate, as judicial police. Certain units, such as the Forest, Environmental and Agri-food Units Command of the Carabinieri, have specialized expertise in crimes against animals. For this reason, on a case-by-case basis, it is possible to assess to whom it is most appropriate to turn to, for example:

- the Carabinieri headquarters or the territorial offices of the State Police, simply by dialing the emergency number 112;
- by contacting your nearest Police or Carabinieri station in person.

If you prefer, before proceeding, you can also email us at:

animalcruelty@humaneworld.org or **info@iononcombatto.it**



In cases where a fight is taking place or there is concrete and immediate evidence suggesting that one is about to begin, it is strongly recommended to promptly contact one of the police forces by phone. This allows for urgent intervention aimed at stopping the offense and possibly identifying the individuals involved in the act.

If there is no immediate risk to the animals' safety, but there is evidence of a potential threat, it is possible to file a formal report, following the procedures outlined in the section “The Role of Citizens: Recommended Actions.”

Before filing a report, it may be helpful to gain a clearer understanding of the dog breeds most commonly involved, the different roles dogs may be assigned and the paraphernalia or situations that may indicate the occurrence of fights or related activities.

The breeds involved

The most commonly used dog breeds are those of the molossoid family with the American pit bull terrier being the breed of choice for professional dogfighters. Street-level fighters may also use other breeds such as any pit bull-type dog or any dog who will fight.



The roles of dogs

Within dogfighting, violence is not limited to the fights themselves—it also manifests through training practices such as sparring and forced breeding, both of which cause severe physical and psychological harm.

FIGHTING DOG A dog who takes part in fights after undergoing specific training aimed at triggering aggression toward other dogs and submission toward humans. The same dog may have previously been used as a sparring partner or, over time, may be used for breeding.

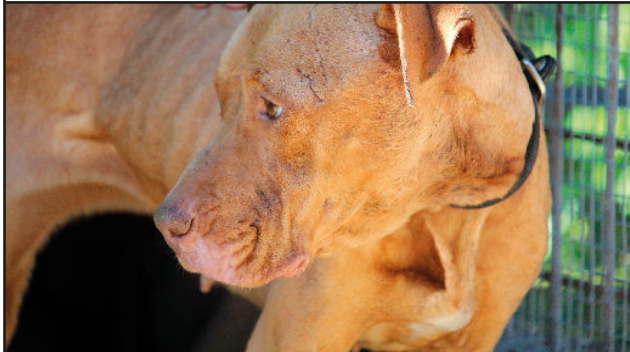
SPARRING PARTNER A dog used to test or train fighting dogs. They are not necessarily weaker animals, but rather dogs considered “useful” in provoking a reaction from the intended future fighter. The harm inflicted is not only physical; many develop dissociative states and deep psychological trauma.

Signs of the presence of criminal activities

The following photos illustrate equipment, tools and other signs that may indicate the presence of dogfighting or related activities such as training and breeding at a given location.

Dogs on chains

Many organizers and participants involved in criminal activities related to dogfighting keep their animals chained and sometimes secured with padlocks. In urban areas, dogs are often confined in basements or other enclosed spaces. If multiple dogs are kept in a single home, separated from one another and showing signs of injuries, there is a possibility that they are being abused and used in dogfighting activities.



Scarring

Scars resulting from fights are often found on the snouts and front legs of the animals. Other warning signs include deep puncture wounds, which are unlikely to be caused by non-fighting dogs. If you notice a dog with these characteristics, contact the police forces immediately.

Treadmills

Organizers and participants in dogfighting often train the animals using treadmills—both homemade and electric. These setups frequently include chains, barriers or harnesses to secure dogs to the treadmill and prevent them from escaping the training session.



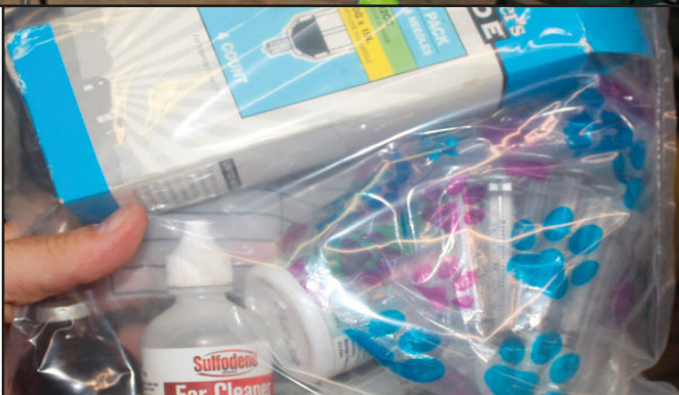
Fighting pit

Arenas are often built from plywood and measure between 18 and 36 square meters, with walls up to 1 meter high. The pits where dogs are forced to fight can also be made from wire mesh or other improvised materials. Diagonal lines are typically drawn in two opposite corners to hold the dogs until the referees give the order for their release. In many cases, bloodstains are present.



Washtubs

Before a match, participating animal fighters wash and inspect their opponents' dogs under the supervision of a referee. This procedure is intended to remove any poisonous or caustic substances that may have been applied to the dog's coat—one of the methods used to commit fraud.



Vitamins, drugs and veterinary supplies

Although these items may have legitimate uses, they are often used in connection with criminal activities related to dogfighting. Some of the most commonly used drugs include dexamethasone (a steroid), amoxicillin and ampicillin (antibiotics), iron supplements and performance-enhancing substances such as stanozolol (a synthetic derivative of testosterone) and nandrolone (a testosterone derivative). Veterinary treatments are often administered on-site to avoid drawing attention to the illegal activities being carried out.



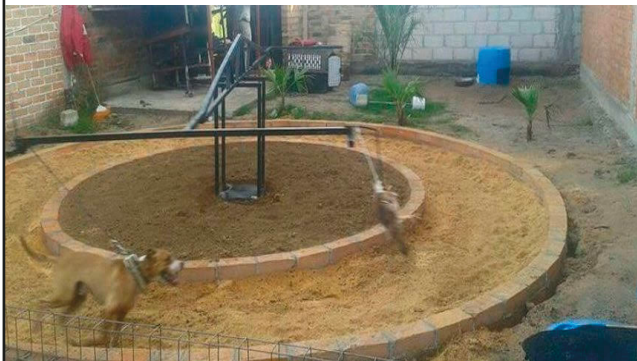


Break stick

These sticks are used to force the dog's mouth open in order to break up the fight. They are approximately 30 centimeters long, with a tapered tip, and are often stained with blood.

Jenny Mill, also known as Cat Mill

These devices resemble small-sized horse lures. Attached to a spoke extending from a central rotating shaft, the dog chases a small animal—such as a rabbit or a cat—placed as prey inside a cage or directly secured to the same spoke.

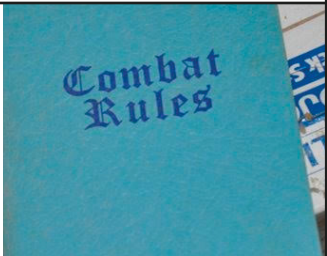


Springpole

The dog jumps to grab the springpole—which consists of a knotted rope made of leather, rubber or other materials hanging from a beam or a sturdy tree branch—while firmly planting their hind legs on the ground. The animal swings from side to side, mimicking the movement of a dog grabbing another dog in the pit. This tool is used to help the fighting dog develop jaw strength and balance.

Dogfighting publications

Dogfighters keep track of winning dogs and bloodlines through underground publications.



Breeding stand

A stand in which a female dog is physically strapped by her neck and waist to prevent her from moving or attacking male dogs during mating, therefore forcing her to endure the act.





The role of citizens: behaviour to be observed

Citizens can help report and curb dogfighting, with the goal of its complete eradication. To do so, it is essential to acquire knowledge of the warning signs and the proper methods for collecting evidence—always acting in full compliance with established procedures and roles defined by current laws. Citizens should not attempt to replace the Judicial Police or investigative authorities but rather should aim to provide them with all useful information to enable efficient and effective intervention.

When collecting potential evidence such as photos and videos, it is important to:

- respect privacy and property laws by not entering gardens or private homes and not photographing or filming inside places that constitute private residences;
- remember that it is lawful to photograph or record situations and events occurring in public places, or visible from public areas—for example, through the fence of a garden. However, such recordings must not be publicly disclosed or shared in any way but should be handed over directly to the police forces or investigative authorities.

If you come across websites or web pages through which images or videos of dog fights are shared or that are used to organize such fights, you can report them to the cyber police (Polizia Postale) via the dedicated website: commissariatodips.it/segnalazioni/index.html

If you witness criminal activities against animals, do not become an accomplice, do not look the other way, report it!

In case of emergency, call 112 immediately!

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With millions of supporters and work happening in over 50 countries, Humane World for Animals—formerly called Humane Society International—addresses the most deeply entrenched forms of animal cruelty and suffering. As the leading voice in the animal protection space, we work to end the cruelest practices, care for animals in crisis and build a stronger animal protection movement. Driving toward the greatest global impact, we aim to achieve the vision behind our name: a more humane world.



Fondazione Cave Canem is a women's non-profit organization founded with the aim of improving the health and social relationship between animals and humans. It pursues objectives of great social impact throughout Italy, with concrete and measurable results. It finances co-design models, awareness campaigns, and social inclusion practices to change the fate and protect the rights of animals in need, particularly dogs and cats.

More info and contact:
www.iononcombatto.it