



*NYSAPF is the voice of New York's humane societies, SPCAs, non-profit and municipal animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations which focus on homeless animals.*

## **MEMO IN SUPPORT OF A.7303 (Rosenthal)-S.8471 (Skoufis) Add Animal Fighting to the NYS Enterprise Corruption Statute**

The New York State Animal Protection supports A7303/S.6913 which would add animal fighting as a designated criminal act under the Penal Law Article 460 Enterprise Corruption statute and provides sentencing enhancements for certain animal fighting offenses.

Animal fighting is still thriving in New York State. The blood sport is not only extremely inhumane for the animals, but it is often linked to the trafficking of illegal drugs and weapons. Spectators come for the animal fight and can also buy drugs and guns.

While animal fighting is a criminal offense under the state's Agriculture and Markets Law, there are very limited penalties for the network of organized dog fights. This is a criminal underground activity that includes breeding, training, transporting, and fighting dogs for amusement or gain. This blood sport generates significant income from the traffickers/owners of the dogs as well as significant suffering of the bait dogs used in training and the dogs that are trained to fight one another.

A Long Island case in 2021 revealed a highly sophisticated, diversified network of organized dog fighters who ranged widely in age, ethnicity and geographic location. They were arrested but not after they ran the largest dogfighting ring in Suffolk County history. This interstate operation extended from Long Island to New York City, Connecticut and Massachusetts, with detectives infiltrating the ring to bring it down from the inside.

Recently, two Cheektowaga men, 23 and 24 years of age, were indicted on multiple charges stemming from animal fighting that they organized:

- Three counts of prohibition of animal fighting (Class "E" felonies under New York Agriculture and Markets Law)
- Four counts of overdriving, torturing, and injuring animals; failure to provide proper sustenance (Class "A" misdemeanors under New York Agriculture and Markets Law)
- One count of prohibition of animal fighting, possession, sale or making of animal fighting paraphernalia (Class "B" misdemeanor under New York Agriculture and Markets Law)

In April 2022, humane law enforcement officers from the SPCA Serving Erie County executed a search warrant at one of the individual's residences and found evidence common in dog fighting, three lives dogs and the remains of two deceased dogs. The men are accused of training the dogs to fight for amusement or gain as well as depriving the dogs of food and medical treatment.

PLEASE TURN OVER . . .

Dog fighting is a serious, deadly organized criminal activity. It should be treated as such in New York State law. However, while the Penal Law includes animal fighting as a class A misdemeanor, offenders charged with these class A misdemeanors often walk free after paying a fine.

A.7303/S.6913 would authorize animal fighting rings to be chargeable under Article 460 of the Penal Law, specifically amending Section 460.10--which defines "criminal acts" that may be the basis for an enterprise corruption prosecution--to include the felony violations prohibiting of animal fighting under AGM § 351(2).

The reasons to support this bill are endless – but if New York State is serious about addressing animal crimes and animal abuse, this is a great place to start.