



**Review Article**

**Dog fighting: A nasty work**

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**Abstract**

Aim of this paper was to review dog fighting which happens almost all over the world. Generally, two dogs, often of a pit bull breed, are put into an area to fight and sometimes kill each other. Dog fighting can involve high stakes, and carries with it the same sociological dangers of other gambling, particularly illegal gambling, and activities. They are generally unsocialized to any other dogs and to most people. However, many professional fighters invest much time and money in conditioning their animals. They are frequently given quality nutrition and basic veterinary care. On the contrary, the street fighters usually make little investment in conditioning or training their animals. Instead, they rely on cruel methods to encourage their dogs to fight, including starvation, physical abuse, isolation and the use of stimulants or other drugs that excite the dogs. Dog fights are organized in places of variety of locations and at any time. In rural areas, they may be impromptu events in a barn, outdoor pit, back alley, or carefully planned and staged enterprises in a location specially designed and maintained for the purpose. On the other hand in urban areas, fights may happen in garages, basements, warehouses, abandoned buildings, back alleys, neighbourhood playgrounds, or even in the streets.

**Keywords:** *Canis familiaris*; pit bull; blood sport; illegal sports; animal fight

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**Introduction**

Domestic livestock animals serve humanity by giving plenty of products including meat, milk, egg, honey, floss silk, wool, fur, skin, feather, intestine, work, amusement etc (Ertugrul et al., 1993). Moreover, some animals have been and continue to be used for fighting by some mentally abnormal people. In various regions of the world, there are popular animal fighting events including fighting of bull, camel, cock, cricket, dog, horse, partridge and ram (Anon, 2014a). For centuries usually dog fighting has been principally enjoyed by men. Unfortunately, the popularity of this

activity has increased. There was little initial interference from the law, since it was possible to fight two dogs in any hollow or shed without attracting much attention, for dogs fight with relatively little noise. They can easily be removed after the fight, carried away in sacks if their condition was likely to draw suspicion (Drable, 2014). For example in USA, dog attacks and bites are not so common (Hussain, 2005). Although more than 20 fatalities happened each year in USA because of dog biting, there was no report that a man did during dog fight, but the dog ((Lockwood, 1995). Maybe the 20 fatalities because of dog biting seem as tragic but at least 8000 humans were killed by other

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human each year which was 200 times more than dog biting deaths (Lockwood, 1995). The fight may end in one of four ways: first a dog's failure to scratch; secondly the owner's calling the fight (analogous to the manager of a boxer throwing the towel into the ring, a signal that the fighter has quit); thirdly the death of one or both dogs, or fourthly one of the dogs jumping the pit. The aim of this paper is to summarize dog fighting in the world as an unwanted job.

### Rules

Among animals world, it is well know that dog is a loyal animal. Humans abuse this quality of the dog (Kalof and Iliopoulou, 2011). A dog's bond to humans is analogous to child-parent and chimpanzee-human attachment behaviour, because the observed behavioural phenomena and the classification are similar to those described in mother-infant interactions (Topal et al., 1998).

Dog fighting is described as "The act of baiting two dogs against one another for entertainment or gain" (Evans et al., 1998). It involves placing two dogs in a pit until one either quits or dies. Dog fighting is almost universally illegal. Generally, two dogs, often of a pit bull breed, are put into an area to fight and sometimes kill each other. Dog fights usually last until one dog is declared a winner, which occurs when one dog fails to attack under the rules of such events, one dog dies, or one dog jumps out of the pit (Iliopoulou, 2014). Dog fighting involves high stakes, and carries with it the same sociological dangers of other gambling, particularly illegal gambling, activities (Anon, 2014b). In some organized fights, the fighting dogs are weighed to make sure they are approximately the same weight. Handlers will often wash and examine the opponent's dog to remove any toxic substances that may have been placed on the fur in an attempt to deter or harm the opposing dog (Anon, 2014c).

When a fight begins, spectators place bets with one another which dog will win. There are some strict rules for fights. The dogs continue fighting until one of them makes a "turn," which is defined as turning the head and shoulders away from the opponent. When the referee calls the turn, the handlers then handle their dogs when they are out of "holds," which means they are not biting each other. The dog who made the turn must "scratch" to his opponent. Scratching is defined as crossing the scratch line, which is drawn in the centre of the pit, and attacking one's opponent within a specified amount of time usually 10 to 30 seconds. If a dog fails to scratch, his opponent is declared the winner. If the scratch is successfully completed, the fight continues. From this point on the dogs are handled only when they are out of holds, and the dogs are required to scratch in turn. If a dog fails to scratch in turn, he is declared the loser. The fight may end in one

of four ways: first a dog's failure to scratch; secondly the owner's calling the fight (analogous to the manager of a boxer throwing the towel into the ring, a signal that the fighter has quit); thirdly the death of one or both dogs, or fourthly one of the dogs jumping the pit (Forsyth and Evans, 1998; Anon, 2014c; Gasimzadeh, 2014). Fights can last either just a few minutes or several hours depending on condition of dogs. Both animals may suffer injuries, including puncture wounds, lacerations, blood loss, crushing injuries and broken bones. Although fights are not usually to the death, many dogs succumb to their injuries later (Anon, 2014c).

Dog fighting events also help to spread some diseases such as *Canine babesiosis* and *Babesia gibsoni*. *C. babesiosis* and *B. gibsoni* spread during dog fighting because of non-vectorized transmission by blood exchange during fighting and biting (Irwin, 2009).

### Training

According to fighting dog trainer fighting dogs must be kept isolated from other dogs, so they spend most of their lives on short, heavy chains, often just out of reach of other dogs. They are generally unsocialized to any other dogs and to most people. However, many professional fighters invest much time and money in conditioning their animals. They are frequently given quality nutrition and basic veterinary care. The dogs are exercised under controlled conditions. The maintaining condition of fighting dogs may also make use of a variety of legal and illegal drugs, including anabolic steroids to develop muscle mass and encourage aggressiveness. Narcotic drugs may also be used to increase the dogs' aggression, increase reactivity and mask pain or fear during a fight. Young animals are often trained or tested by allowing them to fight with other dogs in well-controlled rolls. Any dog may be discarded or killed, if the dog shows little inclination to fight. Some fighters will use stolen pets as bait dogs or sparring partners. There are many other common techniques used in the training and testing of dogs, but these methods vary widely among different fighters and may range from systematic to haphazard. In USA the street fighters usually make little investment in conditioning or training their animals. Instead, they rely on cruel methods to encourage their dogs to fight, including starvation, physical abuse, isolation and the use of stimulants or other drugs that excite the dogs (Anon, 2014c).

In USA fighting dogs are commonly conditioned from a very early age to develop what dog-fighters refer to as "gameness." Dog-fighter applies training by depending on his level and experience on dogs. In USA the methods are commonly used to train the dogs:

Treadmill: The fighting dogs are run on the treadmills to develop cardiovascular fitness and endurance.

**Catmill or Jenny:** This device looks like a carnival horse walker with several beams jetting out from a central rotating pole. The dogs are chained to one beam and another small animal like a cat, small dog, or rabbit, is harnessed to or hung from another beam. The dogs run in circles by chasing the lure. Once the exercise sessions are over, the dogs are usually rewarded with the bait they had been pursuing.

**Springpole or Jump pole:** It is a tool that a large pole with a spring hanging down to which a rope, tire, or animal hide is affixed that the dogs jump to and dangle from for extended periods of time. This strengthens the jaw muscles and back legs.

**Flirt pole:** A handheld pole with a lure attached. The dogs chase the lure along the ground.

**Chains:** Dogs have very heavy chains wrapped around their necks, generally in lieu of collars; they build neck and upper body strength by constantly bearing the immense weight of the chains.

**Weights:** Weights are often affixed to chains and dangled from the dogs' necks. This builds neck and upper body strength. Generally, dogs are permanently chained this way. However, sometimes the trainers run them with their weights attached.

**Bait:** Animals are tied up while the dogs tear them apart or sometimes they are confined in an area to be chased and mauled by the dogs.

**Drugs, vitamins, and supplements:** Dogs are given iron/liver extract; vitamin B-12; provim; magnum supplement; hormones of testosterone, propionate, reposit, probolic oil; weight-gain supplements; creatine monohydrate; speed; steroids of winstrol V, dinabol, equipose; and cocaine. The dogs are trained against one another and against older, more experienced dogs. In the early stages of training, the dogs are incited to lunge at each other without touching and engage in quick, controlled fights called rolls or bumps. Once the dogs appear match ready, they are pitted against stronger dogs to test their gameness or tenacity in the face of exhaustion and impending defeat. If the dogs pass the test, they are deemed ready to fight (Gibson, 2005).

### **Place**

Dog fights are organized in places of variety of locations and at any time. In rural areas they may be impromptu events in a barn, outdoor pit, back alley, or carefully planned and staged enterprises in a location specially designed and maintained for the purpose. On the other hand in urban areas, fights may happen in garages, basements, warehouses, abandoned buildings, back alleys, neighbourhood playgrounds, or even in the streets (Kalof and Talor, 2007; Anon, 2014c,d). In USA two dogs are put into a square pit, which measures from 3.5 to 6 meters on each side. The pit is surrounded by walls between 0.6 and 1.2 meters high and usually

made of wood, plywood, hay bales, or chain link. There are two handlers and one referee in the pit with the dogs. During dogfight spectators surround the pit, the sides of which are wooden and three to four feet high. The dogfight starts when the referee tells the handlers to pit their dogs, at which time the dogs are released and attack (Forsyth and Evans, 1998; Anon, 2014c).

### **Types of fighters**

There are three types of dog fighters including street fighters, hobbyists, and professionals. Hobbyists and professionals often decry the techniques street fighters use to train their dogs. Such techniques include starving, drugging, and physically abusing the dog. Street fighters are frequently associated with gang activities. They fight dogs over insults, turf invasions, or simple taunts like "My dog can kill your dog". These type of fights are often spontaneous, unorganized, conducted for money, drugs, or bragging rights. Urban street fighters generally have several dogs chained in back-yards, often behind privacy fences, or in basements or garages. The dogs are often found by police and animal control officers either dead or dying after a street fight. Due to the spontaneity of a street fight, they are very difficult to respond to unless reported immediately (Ensminger, 2010; Boucher, 2011; Anon, 2014b,d).

The second types of fighters are hobbyists. They fight dogs for supplemental income and entertainment purposes. They typically have one or more dogs participating in several organized fights and operate primarily within a specific geographic network. Hobbyists are also informed with one another and tend to return to predetermined fight venues repeatedly.

The last types are professionals. Professionals breed generations of skilled "game dogs" and take a great pride in their dogs' lineage. Those fighters make a tremendous amount of money charging stud fees to breed their champions. They also earn the fees and winnings they collect for fighting them. Professionals also tend to own a large number of dogs which are sometimes 50 dogs or more. In USA professional fighters also use trade journals to discuss recent fights and to advertise the sale of training equipment and puppies such as *Your Friend and Mine*, *Game Dog Times*, *The American Warrior*, and *The Pit Bull Chronicle*. Some fighters operate on a national or even international level within highly secret networks (Gibson, 2005; Ensminger, 2010; Anon, 2014b,d).

### **Victims**

The principal victim of dog fighting is absolutely dogs. The dogs are born, bought or stolen for fighting and they are often neglected and abused from the start. Most of them spend their entire lives alone on chains or in cages and only know the attention of a human when

they are being trained to fight and they only know the company of other animals in the context of being trained to kill them. Moreover, most of the dogs spend their entire lives without adequate food, water, or shelter (Gibson, 2005). During a fight a failure to scratch is the most common way in which a fight ends. Less common is the death of one of the opponents. The least common ending is a dog's jumping the pit, which means the dog literally jumps out of the pit in order to escape the opponent. This is rare because a dogman will not risk humiliation by bringing a cur dog (dog that refuses to fight) to a fight. The dog that jumps the pit will surely die at the hands of his owner. Even in some cases a dog whose both front legs broken continues to fight by sliding on his chest (Forsyth and Evans, 1998). When a dog is not successful in a fight, a professional may dispose of it using a variety of techniques such as drowning, strangulation, hanging, gunshot, electrocution or some other method. Sometimes professionals and hobbyists dispose of dogs deemed aggressive to humans to street fighters (Boucher, 2011).

Dog fighting is an entertainment for very few people but enough to cause 16,000 dogs which equals to 44 dogs per day each year to be killed by organized dog fighting. Training of dogs for the fights contains the destruction of other animals including cats. Dogs rescued from fighting make poor pets and must often be destroyed. Organizers of dog fights face prison terms of five years and \$250,000 in fines. In some jurisdictions, even attending a dogfight can result in imprisonment and fines. In victims of dog fighting there must also be mentioned about bait animals. Bait animals are used to test a dog's fighting instinct. Those animals are often mauled or killed in the process. Trainers provide bait animals from several sources including wild or feral animals, animals obtained from a shelter, or in some cases, stolen pets. Sometimes the animals are also obtained through "free to a good home" advertisements. A news reports was published by the Humane Society of USA. According to a report the snouts of bait dogs are wrapped with duct tape to prevent them from injuring dogs being trained for fighting (Anon 2014c). Their teeth are filed and their nails are cut until nothing is left. Other animals, such as cats and rabbits are also reported to be used as bait animals. Experts have said small dogs, kittens and rabbits are more at risk of being stolen for bait than larger animals (Anon, 2014e). In USA not all rescued pit bulls are involved in the practice of dog fighting, but John Goodwin of the Human Society of USA says that many bear the hallmarks of the industry that a fight-crazy disposition and the scars to prove it. Rescued dogs are kept at animal shelters until a judge makes a determination on the dog's fate. Because fighting dogs have been bred to attack and kill other dogs, almost all of them are euthanized. There are no definitive figures on how

many fight dogs are rescued in USA annually, but Goodwin informs that about 4 million dogs in shelters are euthanized each year (Villavicencio, 2007).

The second victim is humankind who is mostly involved in crime. Many of the practices associated with the raising and training of fighting dogs can be prosecuted separately as animal abuse or neglect. Moreover, dog fighting naturally involves illegal gambling. Dogfighters often face additional charges related to drug, alcohol and weapons violations as well as probation violations. Arguments over dog fights have also resulted in incidents that have led to charges of assault and even homicide. Other charges might include conspiracy, corruption of minors, money laundering, etc (Anon, 2014b). A shocking report proved that children began to attend dog fighting events. Kalof and Taylor informed in a case that almost all children interviewed in the ninth grade classes in a high school in Pontiac, Michigan had personally witnessed a dog fight. Most of them believed that there was nothing wrong with dog fighting. Those children were so desensitized to violence that they did not perceive it as morally wrong or cruel (Kalof and Taylor, 2007).

### Conclusion

It is too difficult to understand that some people defend dog fighting. According to those abnormal people dog fights are necessary and should be carried out (Gasimzadeh, 2014). This kind of people is rare in community but they are always present in the community and always will be. The most important thing to prevent dog fighting is to inform related police or gendarme forces. Also penalties should be more increased.

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