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# DOG FIGHTING

## THE PROBLEM

*Dog fighting is a brutal and highly secretive underground activity that causes immense suffering and death. It occurs nationwide, and in Connecticut, in basements, alleys, vacant buildings, rural areas, and even vehicles. Losing dogs that survive are often killed in cruel ways to erase the shame of defeat.*

### Three Categories of Dog Fighters

- **Street Fighters:** Typically own one dog, prioritize aggression, and engage in impromptu fights. Many are gang members who use their dogs for status and intimidation. Their fights can be especially barbaric, such as forcing dogs to fight inside car trunks ("trunking").
- **Hobbyists:** Own multiple dogs, focus on breeding and training, and participate in organized fights within a known network. Found in both urban and rural areas, they choose dogs for agility rather than size.
- **Professionals (Dogmen):** The most organized and secretive. Many operate large-scale breeding yards and have national or even international networks. Some have respectable careers, such as veterinarians or teachers, but are deeply involved in organized crime.

Professional dog fighters are the hardest to infiltrate and prosecute. They operate in a closed world where long-term undercover investigations are often the only way to gain access. Their fights involve huge sums of money, and beyond financial gain, Dogmen take pride in their legacy, breeding champions with legendary reputations.

Dogs spend their first 18 months to two years tethered with little training. At around two years old, they are tested in a short fight. Those that refuse to fight (called curs) are either killed or used as bait for other dogs. Fighters prize "gameness," a dog's willingness to fight to the death despite pain or injury.

The American Pit Bull Terrier is the breed of choice for Hobbyists and Professionals due to its strength, agility, and loyalty.

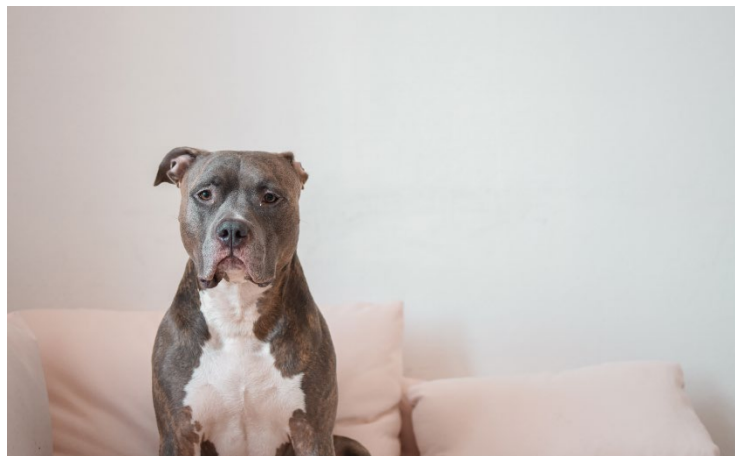


Photo by Arttu Päivinen

## WHERE IT'S HAPPENING

Dog fighting attracts people from all backgrounds, including teachers, doctors, veterinarians, and professional athletes. Some operations run out of seemingly innocent locations, such as daycare centers. While fights occur in both rural and urban areas, live streaming now allows spectators to participate remotely. Professionals go to great lengths to conceal their activities.

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## HOW TO SPOT, REPORT & PREVENT

Dogs used in fighting often show physical signs such as torn or missing ears, bite wounds, puncture marks, bruising, and swollen faces. Bait dogs, if they survive, have similar injuries but may also have filed or missing teeth to prevent harm to fighting dogs.

If you suspect dog fighting, do not intervene. Report it to local authorities or animal control officers. Keep pets secure to prevent theft for baiting, and never list pets as "free to a good home" online, as dog fighters often exploit these listings.

**The most effective way to stop dog fighting is through strong laws and public awareness. Advocate for tougher animal cruelty laws and support law enforcement efforts to combat this crime.**

## STATE AND LOCAL RESTRICTIONS

Dog fighting is illegal at both state and federal levels, with severe penalties. Attending a fight is also a crime, and bringing a minor to a fight increases penalties. Any interstate activity, such as transporting dogs for fights, can elevate the crime to a federal offense.

All 50 states prohibit animal fighting, though laws vary. Some states specify banned activities, while others rely on general animal cruelty laws.

At the federal level, the Animal Welfare Act bans animal fighting across state or international lines. The Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act (2007) strengthened penalties. Large-scale dog fighting rings often involve additional crimes such as illegal weapons, drug trafficking, racketeering, human trafficking, and financial crimes.

In Connecticut, CGS 53-247(C) classifies dog fighting as a Class D felony. It is illegal to own, train, or bet on fighting dogs, permit fights on one's property, or attend fights.

## Criminal offenses related to dog fighting

- Possessing dog fighting paraphernalia
- Training dogs to fight
- Prolonging fights
- Possessing a dog intended for fighting
- Using bait animals
- Organizing, promoting, or advertising fights
- Allowing fights on one's property
- Betting on fights
- Selling, breeding, or transporting fighting dogs
- Owning a dog with injuries consistent with fighting

## RESOURCES

- *The Lost Dogs* by Jim Gorant
- [Detailed Discussion of Dog Fighting](#)
- [Inside the Illegal World of Dog Fighting](#)
- [Bringing Down the Dogmen](#)
- [Chicago Police Dog Fighting Tips](#)
- [Stallone: The Face of Dog Fighting](#)
- [NPR: The Battle to Stop Dog Fighting](#)
- [Michael Vick Case Study](#)
- [Life on a Chain: Inside Dog Fighting](#) (Graphic Content)

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