
Key prohibitions related to staged animal fighting ventures

Under current federal law, it is a crime to:

- Knowingly sponsoring or exhibiting in an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly attending an animal fighting venture, or knowingly causing an individual who has not attained the age of 16 to attend an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly buying, selling, possessing, training, transporting, delivering, or receiving any animal for purposes of having the animal participate in an animal fighting venture;
- Knowingly using the mail service of the U.S. Postal Service, or any "written, wire, radio televisions or other form of communications in, or using a facility of, interstate commerce," to advertise an animal for use in an animal fighting venture, or to advertise a knife, gaff, or other sharp instrument designed to be attached to the leg of a bird for use in an animal fighting venture, or to promote or in any other manner further an animal fighting venture except as performed outside the U.S.;
- Knowingly selling, buying, transporting, or delivering in interstate or foreign commerce "a knife, a gaff, or any other sharp instrument" designed or intended to be attached to the leg of a bird for use in an animal fighting venture.

Penalties for each violation of any one of these provisions allows for a maximum of 5 years in prison and a $250,000 fine for perpetrators, except for an adult attending an animal fighting venture. Penalties for adult attendance are 1 year in prison and a $5,000 fine.

An “animal fighting venture “involves a fight conducted or to be conducted between at least 2 animals for purposes of sport, wagering, or entertainment, except that the term “animal fighting venture shall not be deemed to include any activity the primary purpose of which involves the use or one or more animals in hunting another animal.”

Prohibitions on attending on selling, buying, possessing, training, transporting, delivering, or receiving an animal in an animal fighting venture; attending an animal fighting venture; or trafficking in knives or gaffs for use on a bird have long applied to all U.S. territories. On December 20, 2019, these prohibitions are effective in the U.S. territories: sponsoring or exhibiting an animal in an animal fighting venture or knowing using the mail service of the U.S. Postal Service, or advertising an animal for use in a fighting venture, to advertise a knife or gaff, or to promote an animal fighting venture.