



Colin Stretch  
Chief Legal Officer & Corporate Secretary  
Etsy, Inc.  
117 Adams Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Via email: [cstretch@etsy.com](mailto:cstretch@etsy.com)

**Re: Illegal Sale of Cockfighting Instruments on Etsy Marketplace**

Dear Mr. Stretch:

On behalf of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, we write to notify you of a grave concern: Etsy's online marketplace is being used to facilitate the sale of illegal cockfighting paraphernalia, including sharp instruments designed to maximize injury to animals in staged fights.

Animal Wellness Action is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting laws and policies that prevent cruelty to animals and fostering their humane treatment. The Center for a Humane Economy, our allied organization, works to align corporate conduct with principles of humane treatment of animals. Together, we have been at the forefront of confronting animal fighting across the United States and its territories. Our efforts include engaging in courtroom challenges to uphold prohibitions on cockfighting, infiltrating cockfighting venues and documenting illegal activity, working with federal and local law enforcement agencies to bring animal fighters to justice, and advancing federal legislation to close loopholes and strengthen animal fighting prohibitions.

The sale of cockfighting implements—such as razor-sharp “gaffs” and knives strapped to birds’ legs to inflict maximum damage—is plainly illegal under federal law. Specifically:

**7 U.S.C. § 2156** (the Animal Welfare Act’s animal fighting provision) makes it unlawful to sell, buy, transport, deliver, or receive in interstate or foreign commerce “any knife, gaff, or other sharp instrument attached, or designed or intended to be attached, to the leg of a bird for use in an animal fighting venture.”

**18 U.S.C. § 49** provides criminal penalties for anyone who violates these prohibitions.

Etsy’s Terms of Use and Prohibited Items Policy also forbid this conduct. Your Terms of Use expressly state: “You may not use Etsy’s services for any unlawful purpose, or to promote or engage in illegal activities.” Similarly, your Prohibited Items Policy declares: “Etsy prohibits items that promote, support, or enable illegal activity, including... items that are illegal to sell under applicable law.” Despite this policy, we have identified listings on your site that plainly fall within these prohibitions.

Attached to this letter is a screenshot from a South Carolina-based seller operating under the name “GaffSupplyCo” who is openly advertising cockfighting gaffs. Although the seller provides a disclaimer that the gaffs offered “are paper weights and are for collectible and decorative purposes only,” such a disclaimer is a transparent attempt to circumvent the laws that prohibit such sales and would not withstand legal scrutiny. This seller’s activity is an obvious violation of both federal law and Etsy’s own rules. We believe additional sellers engaged in this unlawful trade remain active on the platform as well.

Courts have found that selling platforms like Etsy may be held liable for illegal items their sellers list if the site is aware of illegal sales and fail to act, or if they play an active role in facilitating the transactions. With this letter, we are putting you officially on notice that this illegal activity is being conducted on your site. In cases such as these, platforms can face liability under federal criminal statutes, intellectual property laws, or consumer protection rules. The legal risk is higher for certain categories where strict liability and criminal laws apply, as they do in this instance.

We strongly urge Etsy to take immediate corrective action by:

1. Identifying and removing all listings for cockfighting gaffs and related implements from your platform.
2. Barring sellers who engage in these unlawful activities.
3. Establishing proactive monitoring mechanisms to prevent the reappearance of such contraband.
4. Communicating publicly that Etsy will not tolerate the use of its marketplace for the promotion or sale of illegal animal fighting paraphernalia.

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy stand ready to work with you and your compliance teams to ensure Etsy is aligned with both federal law and widely shared values of humane treatment of animals.

Please let us know promptly how Etsy intends to address this matter. We would appreciate your response within 10 business days.

Sincerely,



Scott A. Edwards  
General Counsel  
Animal Wellness Action  
Center for a Humane Economy