

May 14, 2026

Robert D. Manfred, Jr.
Commissioner
Major League Baseball
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

I am writing to urge Major League Baseball to investigate and take appropriate disciplinary action regarding Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Edwin Díaz's reported involvement in illegal cockfighting activity in Puerto Rico.

According to a detailed investigative report published by USA TODAY Sports on May 14, 2026, Díaz has been repeatedly linked through social media posts, promotional materials, and news coverage to illegal cockfighting events and enterprises in Puerto Rico. The reporting includes photographs of Díaz in cockfighting arenas, promotional advertisements for cockfighting tournaments featuring Díaz as an honored participant, and published statements from Díaz openly discussing his involvement in cockfighting activities.

Individuals entrusted with the privilege and visibility of representing Major League Baseball should not be participating in acts of felony animal cruelty. In this case, the public evidence suggests not merely passive attendance but active promotion and participation in staged animal fights — conduct prohibited under federal law.

Cockfighting is a sadistic and cruel practice that inflicts slash wounds, puncture injuries, and prolonged suffering on animals for the purposes of bloodletting and illegal gambling. Participation in such conduct is fundamentally incompatible with the standards of sportsmanship, integrity, and social responsibility expected of Major League Baseball players.

Congress has made animal fighting ventures illegal throughout the United States and its territories under Section 26 of the Animal Welfare Act, codified at 7 U.S.C. § 2156. Federal law prohibits knowingly sponsoring, exhibiting, attending, or otherwise participating in an animal fighting venture. The law also criminalizes the possession, transport, and promotion of animals used for fighting.

The federal courts have repeatedly upheld the constitutionality and applicability of these prohibitions in Puerto Rico. In 2021, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit affirmed that Congress validly outlawed cockfighting in Puerto Rico and throughout the United States and its territories. See *Hernandez-Gotay v. United States*, 985 F.3d 71 (1st Cir. 2021). That appellate decision affirmed the district court holding that “Congress acted well within its constitutional

authority in extending the prohibition on animal fighting ventures to Puerto Rico.” See *Club Gallístico de Puerto Rico, Inc. v. United States*, 414 F. Supp. 3d 191 (D.P.R. 2019).

Based on the publicly available evidence, there is substantial reason to believe that Díaz has participated in activities prohibited by federal law.

Major League Baseball has long recognized that off-field conduct matters and that players may be disciplined for actions that undermine public confidence in the sport or reflect poorly on the league. MLB has suspended players for domestic violence, assault, illegal gambling activity, substance abuse violations, and other conduct deemed detrimental to baseball and inconsistent with league values.

Indeed, MLB has repeatedly emphasized that professional athletes serve as public representatives of the game and that conduct involving violence and criminality warrants league intervention even outside the field of play. Participation in organized animal fighting — a form of felony cruelty closely tied to illegal gambling and other criminal enterprises — plainly raises the same integrity concerns.

When it became known that NFL quarterback Michael Vick was involved in dogfighting, the National Football League and the Atlanta Falcons took decisive action, recognizing that participation in organized animal cruelty could not be reconciled with the responsibilities of a professional athlete. There is no moral distinction between dogfighting and cockfighting, and federal law treats them as equally serious crimes.

Cockfighting is not a harmless cultural pastime. It is a criminal blood sport involving deliberate cruelty to animals, illegal gambling, and associations with organized criminal activity. The normalization of such conduct by prominent athletes undermines respect for the law and reflects poorly on professional sports organizations that fail to respond.

I respectfully request that Major League Baseball:

1. Initiate a formal investigation into Edwin Díaz’s involvement in cockfighting activities, including review of publicly available videos, photographs, advertisements, and media reports;
2. Determine whether Díaz has violated MLB policies governing conduct detrimental to baseball;
3. Establish an explicit league policy recognizing participation in animal fighting ventures as prohibited conduct subject to disciplinary action; and
4. Impose appropriate disciplinary measures if the investigation confirms involvement in illegal animal fighting activities.

There should be zero tolerance within professional sports for individuals connected to animal fighting enterprises and the inseparable illegal gambling. Those who participate in or promote organized cruelty toward animals should not be elevated as ambassadors for America’s national pastime.

Major League Baseball has worked hard in recent decades to strengthen public trust in the integrity and values of the sport. Taking meaningful action in this matter would reinforce the principle that violence and cruelty — whether directed at people or animals — have no place in professional athletics.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayne Pacelle".

Wayne Pacelle
President
Animal Wellness Action

cc: Stan Kasten, President & CEO, Los Angeles Dodgers

Lara Pitaro Wisch, Executive Vice President & General Counsel, Major League Baseball