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Monday, July 16, 2018

Fresno Gamecock Breeder Pleads Guilty to Animal Cruelty Charge

FRESNO, Calif. — Thomas Lee Crow, 49, of Fresno, pleaded guilty today to aiding and abetting an unlawful animal fighting venture involving a large cockfighting enterprise, U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced.

Animal fighting is illegal under federal law. In cockfighting, roosters are typically outfitted with sharp instruments or spurs on their legs and fight to the death with spectators betting on the outcome.

According to his plea agreement, law enforcement officers searched Crow's rural Fresno residential property last summer after he was found at a large cockfighting event in Kerman. At the cockfight, Fresno County deputies and detectives recovered 129 fighting roosters, including 28 dead and nine injured roosters. Crow was in possession of \$22,800 in cash, along with a score sheet that tracked fighting bird entries and winnings. They also found cockfighting equipment, such as gaffs, blades, sheaths, gamecock leather boots, and scales. During the search of Crow's residence, officers found an additional 200 fighting roosters and other items associated with cockfighting. They seized over 300 gaffs, including Mexican slashers, injectables used for fighting birds, and scoresheets.

Crow is scheduled for sentencing on October 22, 2018, before Chief U.S. District Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill. Crow faces a maximum statutory penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

This case is the product of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Fresno County Sheriff's Office, Humane Society, and

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Central California SPCA. The Environmental Crimes Section of the U.S. Department of Justice also assisted in the investigation.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has partnered with the Rural Crimes and Animal Cruelty Unit of the Fresno County District Attorney's Office in coordinating the filing of charges against Crow and three spectators at the cockfight in Kerman. The District Attorney's Office prosecuted and convicted the spectators Job Hernandez, 35, of Visalia, Javier Flores-Arreola, 49, of Los Banos, and Javier Cerda, 65, of Reedley on animal cruelty charges. Assistant United States Attorney Karen A. Escobar prosecuted the case against Crow.

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<https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/video/psa-national-center-disaster-fraud>

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