



THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

[Home](#) » [Office of Public Affairs](#) » [News](#)

SHARE 

## JUSTICE NEWS

### Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

## Justice Department Conducts Animal Fighting Investigations Training

On June 21 to 22, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina, the U.S. Department of Justice's Environmental Crimes Section and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General (USDA OIG) hosted over 100 federal and state regulators, criminal investigators and prosecutors from across the country for an animal fighting investigations training held at the National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina.

"Animal fighting ventures are violent and unlawful," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey H. Wood of the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "Ending these cruel practices will require a close partnership among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, including coordinated investigations and enhanced training programs. Our Division is proud to be a leader in this worthy cause."

"Our office was pleased to host this important conference on the serious problem of animal fighting and abuse," said U.S. Attorney John Stuart Bruce for the Eastern District of North Carolina. "Federal, state, and local law enforcement, along with non-governmental animal welfare groups are working together to stop these heinous crimes, and the associated crimes that usually accompany them."

"As the criminal investigations agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Office of Inspector General has successfully conducted animal fighting investigations across the country, with the assistance of our Federal, State and local law enforcement partners," said Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Ann M. Coffey.

"The USDA OIG is pleased to have worked closely with the Department of Justice to coordinate this important training initiative to combat animal fighting and the associated crimes which often occur in animal fighting ventures," said Special Agent in Charge Karen Citizen-Wilcox for the USDA OIG Southeast Region Office of Investigations. "Special Agents from all of the OIG's regional offices will share their knowledge of and experiences with animal fighting investigations with personnel attending from other law enforcement agencies and private organizations."

During the training, animal fighting investigators from the Humane Society of the United States, along with prosecutors and USDA OIG agents who have successfully investigated and prosecuted

### RELATED LINKS

[Speeches and Press Releases](#)

[Videos](#)

[Photos](#)

[Blogs](#)

animal fighting cases, shared their experiences with attendees. Instructors provided participants with an overview of the business of dog fighting, a description of federal animal welfare and cruelty statutes, effective investigative techniques, evidence collection best practices, available resources and authorities for the seizure and post-seizure care of animals and successful sentencing strategies.

State and national animal control associations estimate that upwards of 40,000 people participate in dog fighting in the United States at a professional level, meaning that dog fighting and its associated gambling are their primary or only source of income. An unknown but potentially larger number of people participate in dog fighting on an occasional basis. Cockfighting is thought to be similarly widespread. In addition, animal fighting activities attract other serious crimes, such as gambling, drug dealing, weapons offenses and money laundering. Children are commonly present at animal fighting events.

The federal Animal Welfare Act makes it a felony punishable by up to five years in prison to knowingly sell, buy, possess, train, transport, deliver, or receive any animal, including dogs, for purposes of having the animal participate in an animal fighting venture. In 2014, the Department of Justice designated the Environment and Natural Resources Division as the centralized body within the Department responsible for tracking, coordinating, and working with the U.S. Attorneys' Offices on animal cruelty enforcement matters.

For more information on the Department's efforts, visit: <https://www.justice.gov/enrd/animal-welfare>.

**Component(s):**

Environment and Natural Resources  
Division  
USAO - North Carolina, Eastern

**Press Release Number:**

17-685

*Updated June 21, 2017*

**U.S. Department of Justice**

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

en ESPAÑOL  
Contact DOJ

Archive  
Accessibility  
Information Quality  
Privacy Policy  
Legal Policies & Disclaimers  
Social Media

Budget & Performance  
Office of the Inspector  
General  
No FEAR Act  
For Employees  
FOIA  
USA.gov

**Stay Connected with Justice:**



Email Updates 