

Now Showing: Egregious Acts of Cruelty

Dogfighting DVDs are turning up at retail outlets around the country

BY JOHN GOODWIN

The Michael Vick debacle turned the tide of public sentiment squarely against illegal dogfighting, but the brutal abuse continues. DVDs bearing titles like *Raw Dogs*, *Unleashed: The Realist Pitbull Action Caught on Tape*, and *Pitbull Fights* are popping up at gas stations, convenience stores, and flea markets around the country—evidence that the crime is an ongoing problem.

The DVDs typically show a montage of dogfighting matches in which bloodied, wounded pit bulls fight for their lives within walled-off pits. The filmmakers exploit the animals' plight to create what are essentially canine snuff films. Unable to escape, egged on by their human handlers, the dogs are filmed locked in battle as their lives slowly drain from them.

The videos will disgust any compassionate person—and under the federal Animal Cruelty Depiction Act of 1999, selling them is illegal, a felony offense punishable by hefty fines and up to five years in prison.

Illegal animal fighting videos are nothing new to the marketplace. Until recently, they were sold online at such mainstream sites as eBay, Amazon, and Best Buy, among others. In 2006, these retailers quickly pulled their stock from the shelves after The Humane Society of the United States informed them of the videos' illegal content.

But losing these venues hasn't stopped the DVDs' manufacturers from trying to profit from animal suffering. News outlets in Texas and South Carolina recently reported the appearance of dogfighting DVDs stashed within stacks of other lowbrow fare sold as "entertainment" at local gas stations and flea markets. Small retailers peddle them alongside other DVDs; many sellers may be unaware that the content puts their businesses in violation of federal law.

The HSUS has received an influx of reports about these DVDs in recent

months, and Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign staff have made it a priority to get them off store racks and out of the hands of potential dogfighters. If you spot one of the listed DVDs (or any animal fighting video) for sale in your area, contact John Goodwin, manager of animal fighting issues, at jgoodwin@humanesociety.org; 202-452-1100. **AS**



Cash for Crackdowns

The HSUS wants to equip law enforcement agents and humane investigators with the tools they need to crack down on dogfighting. The organization is now offering a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a dogfighter. This newly increased reward (doubled from the previous offer of \$2,500) will aid law enforcement in investigating and prosecuting these heinous crimes.

You can let people know that America has a zero-tolerance policy on dogfighting by distributing our reward posters, postcards, and stickers around your city. To order our free materials and get more information on our reward fund, visit humanesociety.org/rewards.