



Date: March 29, 2017

To: **House Committee on Judiciary**
Representative Jeff Barker, Chair
Representative Andy Olson, Vice-Chair
House Democratic Leader Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair
Representative Chris Gorsek
Representative Mitch Greenlick
Representative Ann Liniger
Representative Bill Post
Representative Tawna Sanchez
Representative Sherrie Sprenger
Representative Duane Stark
Representative A. Richard Vial

From: **Sharon Harmon**
CEO, Oregon Humane Society

Re: **House Bill 3177**

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **We are here today to ask for your support of HB 3177.**

In 2003, Oregon joined the growing ranks of states that recognized the brutal sport of cockfighting as a crime. Today cockfighting carries felony charges in 40 states, is illegal in all 50 states and is a federal crime as well.

Despite these laws, cockfighting remains a popular, and dangerous, past time in Oregon. Criminal activities associated with cockfighting include homicide, illegal gambling, narcotics, and exposing children to corruption and violence. States with weaker cockfighting laws naturally attract cockfighters and this laundry list of other crimes.

Under Oregon's current cockfighting statutes, only roosters intentionally reared or trained for use in, or that actually are used in a cockfight, are subject to seizure under ORS 167.433. This is an oversight of the significance of gamefowl hens and juvenile birds to the crime of cockfighting.

Basically, all gamefowl breeds are man-made designs that first stem from the Wild Red Jungle Fowl of Southeast Asia. Through selective breeding, we now have the birds we see today, birds bred and trained to fight harder the more injuries they incur, winning often despite being blinded and suffering from mortal wounds as well as broken wings and legs.

Those who participate in the bloody and abusive sport brag about the endurance and strength of their fighting roosters, and sell and purchase birds in breeding “trios” of a rooster and two hens. These “trios” are prized and valuable possessions, which sell for thousands of dollars, and allow cockfighters to produce their own “strain” of bird, engineered to fight to the bloody death, and result in big money for their owner.

In 2015 the OHS participated in a raid on a cockfighting compound in Washington County. Over 1,700 gamefowl were impounded on site and several cockfighters faced criminal charges. Throughout that winter, OHS employees attended to the seized birds until a destruction order was signed demanding the euthanasia of all “fighting birds” on the property. Hundreds of juvenile birds and hens were then summarily neglected or abandoned by their owners, or became the breeding stock by which the remaining cockfighters would rebuild and reinvigorate their “strain.”

This excerpt from the historical reference book “The Science of Cocking” describes the importance of the hen to the winning cockfighter: “In founding the strain, the hen is far more important than the cock. The hen IS the strain. It is through her that the soundness of her line is demonstrated as she passes its characteristics along to her male offspring.”

Ignoring the hen and juvenile bird as evidence of the crime of cockfighting might be compared to ignoring a methamphetamine lab in the investigation of a drug ring. By leaving these important birds after the seizure of roosters in a breeding operation, we leave the cockfighter with the tools he needs to be back in the ring in short order.

Please vote yes on HB 3177.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharon Harmon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sharon Harmon
CEO, Oregon Humane Society
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