

NC law enforcement learns to stamp out animal fighting

By Nadya Vera

Not long ago, many North Carolinians were horrified to learn that one of the world's most notorious breeders of fighting dogs was operating in the Tar Heel State. The arrest and conviction of Ed Faron, dubbed by many as "The Godfather of Dogfighting," on felony dogfighting charges, has energized law enforcement officials across the state to crack down on animal fighters.

On May 19, The Humane Society of the United States went to Central Carolina Community College in Pittsboro to help law enforcement officials crack down on animal-fighting criminals like Faron. The HSUS' advanced course, "Illegal Animal Fighting Investigations II," was held for 29 law enforcement and animal control officers from seven different North Carolina counties as well as surrounding states.

The course taught by the Humane Society University (the training arm of The HSUS) is the first geared

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specifically toward teaching criminal justice and animal care professionals how to conduct illegal animal fighting investigations.

"Illegal Animal Fighting Investigations II is taught by a national subject matter expert and builds on basic knowledge to augment law enforcement professionals' ability to stamp out dogfighting and cockfighting in their jurisdictions," explained Amanda Arrington, the North Carolina state director for The HSUS.

Attendees of The HSUS' enhanced animal fighting seminar were required to have a basic understanding of animal fighting crimes including trends and history, how to identify animal fighting paraphernalia, and the links between these offenses and other criminal activities. The

course then builds upon this foundation with instruction on the fine points of relevant laws, conducting undercover investigations and criminal case preparation.

"My officers and I learned a great deal about how to successfully identify and build animal fighting cases," said Chief David Collins of the Pittsboro Police Department. "This course opened up my eyes to how strong the link is between crimes against humans and crimes against animals."

Animal fighting is a vile form of animal cruelty: Two animals — primarily dogs or roosters selectively bred for aggression and often pumped full of steroids or other aggression-enhancing drugs — are set upon each other in bloody duels, which most frequently end in the death of one or both animals.

Whether it's an organized cockfight in rural backwoods or an impromptu street dogfight in urban areas, animal fighting occurs in communities across the nation — and it is reportedly on the rise in some regions.

Aside from the terrible animal suffering it wreaks, organized animal fighting brings another challenge to law enforcement officers. Surviving animals are often so battered, both physically and mentally, that rehabilitation is impossible. Beyond that are the other crimes associated with animal fighting, ranging from narcotics to illegal firearms to even domestic violence and homicide.

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Nadya Vera works for the Humane Society of the United States. It is the nation's largest animal protection organization, backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — on the Web at humanesociety.org.

Potluck in the Pasture a warm weather pleasure

By Katy McReynolds and Anna Cecelia Blackshaw

Of the many treasures Chatham has to offer, Potluck in the Pasture highlights two of its most abundant — farms and art. Potluck in the Pasture is a dynamic tribute to Chatham's rich agricultural heritage and its multitude of talented artists.

"Our local farms nurture our bodies and inspire our artists," said Daryl Walker, the ChathamArts board member who came up with the idea for the series a few years ago.

Over the years hundreds of people have attended Potluck in the Pasture. Hosted by a different farm every year, visitors get a chance to tour the farm, view work by local artists, hear music by local musicians, and eat locally prepared food in an intimate outdoor setting. It is a communal feast, and participants are asked to bring a potluck dish that includes at least one locally grown ingredient.

Local food ingredients for your potluck may come from your own backyard or neighboring farms, from local farmers' markets at the Chatham County Fairgrounds in Pittsboro (Thursdays), Ferrington Village (Tuesdays), in downtown Siler City (Saturdays), at Southern Village (Thursdays) and in Carrboro

(Wednesdays and Saturdays), or from Chatham Marketplace in Pittsboro and Weaver Street in Southern Village and Carrboro.

Farms who have hosted this event in the past include Celebrity Dairy, Periwinkle Farms and Castlerock Gardens.

A Potluck in the Pasture has been planned for Sunday, June 7, 5-7 p.m. at the CCCC Land Lab, the Sustainable Agriculture program student farm, in downtown Pittsboro. Two of

the artists who will display their work are also working farmers: Mixed media painter Kristy Church is co-owner of Winfield Farm and portrait/landscape artist Tim Tron is co-owner of Grandview Farms. Other artists include: Cindy Bainbridge, Roger Dinger, Michele Mosca, Rita Spina and Diane Swan. Breadfoot (a.k.a. Stephan Meyers) and singer/songwriters Chris Kelley and Mike Slaton will perform.

For more information, please contact Katy McReynolds 919.444.1900 or Chatham Arts 919.542.0394 or www.chathamarts.org.

Anna Cecelia Blackshaw lives in Bynum and Katy McReynolds lives just down the road from her. Both are Chatham arts and farmer supporters.



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AGES 10-12 INSTRUCTOR: Bob Palmatier

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