



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

SENATE AGRICULTURE

EXHIBIT NO. 2

DATE 2-3-11

BILL NO. SB 220

**Testimony in Support of S.B. 220
Presented to the Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee
February 3, 2011
By Wendy Hergenraeder, Montana State Director
The Humane Society of the United States**

I am submitting testimony as a proponent for SB 220 for The Humane Society of the United States on behalf of its more than 36,000 supporters in Montana. Animal fighting is a felony in Montana. SB 220 will close a loophole in the code by prohibiting knowingly attending an animal fight. Currently, Montana is one of only two states in the country with no penalties for being a spectator at an animal fight.

Dog fighting is a sadistic "contest" in which two dogs are placed in a pit to fight each other for the spectators' entertainment and gambling.

Cockfighting is a centuries-old blood sport in which two or more specially bred birds are placed in an enclosure to fight for the primary purpose of gambling and entertainment. The bird's legs are usually fitted with razor-sharp steel blades or with gaffs, which resemble three-inch long, curved ice picks. These artificial spurs are designed to puncture and mutilate.

Numerous law enforcement raids have unearthed many disturbing facets of this illegal "sport." Young children are sometimes present at the events and illegal gambling is the norm for animal fighting. Firearms and other weapons have been found at animal fights because of the large amounts of cash present.

Dogfighting is a felony in all 50 states and is a felony offense under federal law as well. Cockfighting is illegal in every state.

Spectators provide much of the profit associated with animal fighting. The money generated by admission fees and gambling helps keep this "sport" alive. Under current laws, dogfighters and cockfighters can claim they were only present at an animal fight as spectators, thereby avoiding any meaningful punishment. SB 220 would close this loophole and include spectators in the Montana Animal Fighting statute.

Montana is ranked 50th out of 51 (includes D.C.) for dogfighting laws and is only one of two states, the other being Hawaii, where it is legal to be a spectator at a dogfight. Montana is ranked 31st out of 51 for cockfighting laws in part because being a spectator and possession of implements are legal.

Law enforcement officials have documented a strong connection between animal fighting operations and narcotics distribution, illegal firearms and other illicit activities. Let's keep our communities safe. I urge you to support SB 220.