

# Calif. bill would raise fines for cockfighting

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

The dozens of people gathered at a south Sacramento residence on Super Bowl Sunday weren't there to watch the football championship.

They were there, officials say, to watch two roosters battle to the death in an illegal cockfight.

That gathering was broken up by Sacramento County sheriff's deputies, who arrested six people on animal-cruelty charges. Less than two weeks later, El Dorado County Animal Services euthanized 250 birds uncovered in a bust of what officials say was a large cockfighting operation in Garden Valley.

Animal-protection advocates and law enforcement officials say California's relatively lax penalties for cockfighting have caused a noticeable uptick in the illegal activity, pointing to eight major busts in February alone.

Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia classify cockfighting or related crimes as felonies. Unlike in neighbor states Arizona, Nevada and Oregon, some cockfighting violations, including being a spectator at a fight, are misdemeanors here, while participation can be a felony on a second offense.

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