

# El Dorado County man to serve time for cockfighting

An El Dorado County man who was arrested in connection with an alleged cockfighting operation in Garden Valley in February was convicted last week, ordered to serve 45 days in county jail, and pay \$700 in fines and fees and more than \$4,200 in restitution to El Dorado County. Once he serves his jail time, he will be on searchable probation for three years.

Saul Cuevas Ayala, a resident of Garden Valley, pleaded no contest to the misdemeanor crime for possession of game cocks for fighting purposes. As part of the plea, Ayala cannot possess fowl in the future or implements that could be used for cockfighting, and he must reimburse El Dorado County Animal Services for the costs incurred.

Rogelio Reyes-Higareda, who was arrested at the same time, was not charged. He was deported.

According to Henry Brzezinski, chief of El Dorado County Animal Services, cockfighting operations in El Dorado County and throughout California are a growing problem. "We do want the message to get out into the community that these operations are going on," Brzezinski said in a statement. "Cockfighting is not just a concern because it involves cruelty to animals. Typically, large amounts of money, drugs and weapons are involved in cockfighting matches. There are also often other crimes and violence involved."

Ayala and Reyes-Higareda were arrested Feb. 13 when, after a routine traffic stop by law enforcement, injured game birds and cockfighting instruments were found in their vehicle. A search warrant was issued and more than 250 game fowl were found on Ayala's Garden Valley property, along with fighting implements and other evidence of cockfighting. All of the

birds were either in bad shape physically or too aggressive to be rehabilitated, and had to be humanely euthanized, according to Brezinski.