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How Dogfighting Works

by Jacob Silverman

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The alleged involvement of NFL quarterback Michael Vick in a dogfighting ring has created a stir, even prompting some members of [Congress](#) to make public statements about pursuing tougher legislation. Dogfighting, with its accompanying images of mutilated and bloody [dogs](#), rouses strong passions, but many people don't know the reasons why this illegal activity exists or just how widespread it is. In this article, we'll take a look at the brutal world of dogfighting, including h a dogfighting match, the penalties of dogfighting, and why animal rig officers think that dogfighting represents a national epidemic in the U

Dog Image Gallery



Photographer: [Chris Johnson](#) | Agency: [Dreamstime.com](#)

Using a brutal training regimen, dogfighters take advantage of the natural athleticism, strength and loyalty of dogs like pit bulls in order to turn them into fierce killers.
See more [pictures of dogs](#).

It's important to make clear that dogfighting, while sometimes referred to as a "sport," is illegal across the United States and in many countries around the world. Training of fighting dogs involves cruel and inhumane practices, and is itself illegal in most states. These fights are much different than a scuffle that a couple of dogs might get into on the street. Those kinds of fights usually end quickly and without serious injury. An organized dogfight, on the other hand, is the product of deliberate antagonism, harsh training and assault by human owners. In addition, other crimes and forms of violence accompany nearly every major dogfighting ring.

The figures on exactly how many people are involved in dogfighting vary, but experts agree that this \$500 million industry is rising in popularity, especially in [North Carolina](#) and [Virginia](#) [Source: [The Virginia-Pilot](#)]. ABC News says that there are "20,000 to 40,000 dogfight spectators and participants in the United

Animal Witness

Get the inside scoop on the Michael Vick dogfighting scandal on [Animal Planet's Animal Witness](#) and [Michael Vick Dogfighting Timeline](#).



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States" [Source: [ABC News](#)]. [The Humane Society](#) puts the number at 40,000 known [fighting professionals](#) [Source: [CNN](#)]; John Goodwin, an official with that organization, maintains a database of 20,000 names of possible dogfighters [Source: [The Virginia-Pilot](#)].

Once confined to the South, dogfighting now involves people from a wide variety of backgrounds, with the most famous dogfighters and breeders enjoying global fame. The so-called "sport" is particularly popular in Eastern [Europe](#), [Russia](#) and [Central Asia](#). Crime syndicates in Russia and [Italy](#) profit from gambling operations centered around dogfighting. Certain famous rappers and athletes have been linked to dogfighting. The music video for Jay-Z's song "99 Problems" shows dogs preparing for a fight, while DMX raps about dogfighting. NBA player Qyntel Woods once abandoned a pit bull that appeared to have been involved in dogfighting. Even Nike alluded to dogfighting in a TV commercial, showing two dogs seemingly gearing up to fight. These days, dogfighting involves people of all stripes, old and young, rich and poor, urban and rural. One notable case involved a female cancer researcher with a Ph.D. in zoology [Source: [Independent Weekly](#)].

The Internet has played its own part in the spread of dogfighting in that it allows breeders to link up with clients and fans online and to exchange videos. Dogfighters publicize events online. Trainers learn about new training methods and wound treatment and buy equipment online. The ease of use of online video means that some handlers now broadcast fights on Web sites, allowing people to bet without even attending the fight.

On the next page, we'll look at the history of dogfighting and the different breeds of dogs used in it.

Video Gallery: Raising a Healthy Dog

A dog's bad breath may actually be a sign of serious dental disease. Find out about a new [vaccine for dogs](#) that may prevent tooth and gum disease.

Agility is a favorite activity for some dogs, allowing them to show off their athleticism and intelligence. In this video from Hound TV, watch dogs run through [agility courses](#).

In Japan, an aqua sports club trumps the health benefits of underwater exercise for dogs. Watch this video to learn about the benefits of gentle [underwater physiotherapy for dogs](#).

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