

# History of animal fighting & baiting

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[Bull baiting](#)

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[Badger baiting](#)

[Badger dogs](#)

[Teastos MOR](#)

[Dog fighting in](#) [Great Britain](#) [The USA](#) [Russia](#)  
[Latin America](#) [Pakistan](#) [India](#)

[Cock fighting in](#) [Great Britain](#) [Asia](#) [Tamil Nadu](#)  
[Ecuador](#) [Puerto Rico](#) [Guam](#) [Venezuela](#)

## Bull-baiting

In the time of Queen Anne of Great Britain, it was performed in London at Hockley-in-the-Hole, twice a week, and was reasonably common in the provincial towns. At Stamford and at Tutbury, a bull was annually hunted through the streets.

The bull was usually placed in a specially constructed ring for the purpose, and tied to an iron stake so that it could move in an area of about 30 feet. The object of the sport was for the dogs to immobilize the bull.

Before the event started, the bull's nose was usually blown full of pepper to enrage the animal before the baiting. The bull was often placed in a hole in the ground. A variant of bull-baiting was "pinning the bull", where specially-trained dogs would be set upon the bull one at a time, a successful attack resulting in the dog fastening his teeth strongly in the bull's snout. Old English Bulldogs were used to bait bulls, in those times. These Old English bull dogs bear little resemblance to the present day show English bull dog. In fact they came in many shapes sizes and appearances, not unlike the modern day American pit bull terrier.

Hybrid vigour (heterosis) as related to game dogs (battle crosses) and working dogs.

indigenous pit dogs of the British Isles.

A Bill for the suppression of the practice was introduced into the British House of Commons in 1802, but was defeated by 13 votes, and it was not till the year 1835 that it was finally put down by Act of Parliament, called the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835, which forbade the keeping of any house, pit, or other place for baiting or fighting any bull, bear, dog, or other animal.

### Badger baiting and Teastas Mor badger trials of Ireland

The badger is a usually quiet and docile creature in its own domain; however, when cornered or when a threat is perceived it can possess impressive courage. Weighing up to thirty-five pounds when fully grown, the badger has an extraordinarily dangerous bite, which it is willing to use recklessly when threatened. In addition, badgers have extremely powerful claws, used for digging in hard earth, which are more than capable of injuring the dog. A formidable adversary for any dog, the badger was a sought-after participant for the fighting pit.

In order to use the badger's ability to defend itself to test the dog, artificial badger dens were built, captured badgers were put in them and then the dog was set on the badger. The badger would be placed in a box, which was furnished in imitation of its den and from there a tunnel led upward. The owner of the badger puts his animal in the box. The timekeeper is equipped with a watch and the badger's owner releases the dog for the fight. Whoever wants to pit his dog against the badger lets it slide into the tunnel. Usually the dog is seized immediately by the badger and the dog in turn grips the badger. Each bites, tears and pulls the other with all their might. The owner quickly pulls out the dog whose jaws are clamped obstinately onto the badger by its tail. The two are separated and the badger is returned to its den. Then the dog is sent back in to seize the badger and it again is drawn out with the badger. This scene is repeated over and over again. The more often a dog is able to seize the badger within a minute, so that both can be pulled out together, the more it is up to the task and is considered game.

Drawing the badger soon became a very popular sideshow in the pit. It provided a new opportunity to win or lose money by betting. Drawing the badger thus became a permanent part of the fight in the pit. Baits were staged outside the pit in cellars or taverns, as an interesting attraction for the guests.

Towards the middle 1800s Badger-baiting declined in popularity to be replaced by dog fighting.

## Badger dogs

Some dog breeds were specifically developed for badger-baiting whilst several other breeds were used in this task in addition to more general vermin control. In the United Kingdom and Ireland terrier breeds such as the Wheaten terrier Airedale terrier, Bedlington terrier, Blue Paul terrier, Fox terrier, Glen of Imaal terrier, Sealyham terrier, English Bull Terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, Welsh terrier, Wheaten terrier and Kerry blue terrier were most often used.

## Teastas Mor

Strict Irish Kennel Club rules governed the Teastas Mor (certificate of gameness). It was considered that the discipline ensured contests between dog and badger were fair. In the past, to become an Irish Kennel Club terrier champion, it was necessary for a terrier to be in possession of a Teastas Mor. These continued until the kennel ceased to license trials in 1968.

In addition, there were many other badger clubs; each had their own rules, which varied considerably. Frequently, the badger was afforded little protection.



(rare picture of a game to the badger white & brindle English bull terrier)

One of the greatest gamest and most famous badger dogs (deceased). "The Red Hand of Ulster" (English bull terrier). Note that this dog doesn't look anything like the original all white Hink's bull terrier, but more like the present day English show line bull terrier. The Hinks bull terrier was bred back into pit bull lines by Glyn Jones many years after Hink's created his all white dog. Making the American pit bull terrier and the English bull terrier genetically very similar.

## Law

The Cruelty to Animals Act 1835 made badger-baiting illegal in the United Kingdom; however, it continued in London long after and continues to occur in rural areas of the United Kingdom

## Dog fighting

**As with all domestic dogs, the ancestors of all breeds of game dogs were wolves. The foundation breed of the fighting dog was, in its outward appearance, a large, low, heavy breed with a powerful build and strongly developed head.**

Dog breeding in its earliest stages was carried out systematically, with the desire for specialization. It is believed that the development of individual breeds took place in narrow geographic areas, corresponding to the performance required in these regions. Selection for performance, complemented by the breeding for suitable body forms, leads to the formation of breeds. The task of the fighting dog demanded specific basic anatomical traits and temperamental features. The foundation breed was naturally large, low-slung, heavy, powerfully built, with a strongly developed head and a powerful biting apparatus. The goal is to breed a dog that will attack animals but is docile and affectionate toward humans. All breeds with a character suitable for protecting humans and fighting wild animals may be considered for dog fighting. Special attention is often given to the American Pit Bull Terrier or Staffordshire Bull Terrier.

## History

Dog fighting has been documented in the recorded history of many different cultures, and is presumed to have existed since the initial domestication of the species. Many breeds have been bred specifically for the strength, attitude, and physical features that would make them better fighting dogs.

Scholars speculate that large-scale human migration, development of trade, and gifts between royal courts of valuable fighting dogs facilitated the spread of fighting dog breeds. There are many accounts of military campaigns which utilized fighting dogs, as well as royal gifts in the form of large dogs.

Blood sports involving the baiting of animals has occurred since antiquity, most famously at the Colosseum in Rome during the reign of the Roman Empire. However, in contemporary times, it is most associated with the English, who pursued it with utmost

earnestness, which was barely known elsewhere in the world. For over six hundred years the pastime flourished, reaching the peak of its popularity during the sixteenth century. The various animal types involved in the bait allowed for the breed specialization and basic anatomical forms of fighting dogs, which we see today.

Dog fighting has been popular in many countries throughout history and continues to be practiced both legally and illegally around the world.

## Pakistan and Afghanistan

Although illegal, it is not always enforced due to lack of police activity, the most common breed used is known locally as the Bully Kutta although the Gull Terr and English bull terrier is also used.

## Japan

Kamakura period. According to historical documents, Hōjō Takatoki, the 14th shikken (shogun's regent) of the Kamakura shogunate was known to be obsessed with dog fighting, to the point where he allowed his samurai to pay taxes with dogs. At this time, dog fighting was called *inuawase*.

Dog fighting was considered a way for the Samurai to retain their aggressive edge during peaceful times. Several daimyo, such as Chosokabe Motochika and Yamauchi Yodo, both from Tosa Province (present-day Kochi Prefecture), were known to encourage dog fighting. Dog fighting was also popular in Akita Prefecture, which is the origin of the Akita breed.

Dog fighting evolved in Kochi to a form that is called *Tōken* (闘犬). Under modern rules, dogs fight in a fenced ring until one of the dogs barks, yelps, or loses the will to fight. Owners are allowed to throw in the towel, and matches are stopped if a doctor judges it is too dangerous. Draws usually occur when both dogs won't fight or both dogs fight until the time limit. There are various other rules, including one that specifies that a dog will lose if it attempts to copulate. Champion dogs are called *yokozuna*, as in sumo. With generic animal protection laws in place, dog fighting is not specifically banned in Japan, except in Tokyo, and can be seen in Kochi. Currently, most fighting dogs in Japan are Tosa, which is a breed that was developed in Kochi. Dog fighting does not have strong links to [gambling](#) in Japan.

## Latin America

Dog fighting is widely practiced in much of Latin America, especially in Argentina, Peru and many parts of Brazil (where dog fights are illegal). The Dogo Argentino is by far the most common breed involved in the bloodsport. The Fila Brasileiro is also used, but rarely. The American Pit Bull Terrier is another breed that is commonly involved in dog fighting circuits. The Dogo Cubano and dogo cordoba were used for fighting a century ago, but have become extinct.

## United States

Dog fighting is illegal in all North American countries.

According to a study by the College of Law of the Michigan State University published in 2005, in the United States, dog fighting was once completely legal and was sanctioned and promoted during the colonial period (1600s through 1776) and continuing through the Victorian era in the late 19th century. However, by the early twentieth century, the brutality inherent in dog fighting was no longer tolerated by American society. It has become increasingly outlawed, a trend which has continued into the 21st century.

As of 2007, dog fighting is a felony in 48 states and a misdemeanor in Idaho and Wyoming. In most states, it is against the law (and often a felony) to even attend a dog fighting event, regardless of direct participation. According to authorities, dog fighting is increasingly practiced by gangs in low income areas of the United States, and is linked to other unlawful activities, such as gambling.

Despite legality issues, dogs are still commonly used for fighting purposes all across the continent. The American Pit Bull Terrier is the most popular breed used for fighting, but foreign breeds, such as the Dogo Argentino (used widely in South America) and Presa Canario (used in Spain) are also gaining popularity.

## Russia

Although animal cruelty laws exist in Russia, dog fighting is widely practiced. Laws prohibiting dogfights have been passed in certain places, and in others dogfights are legally held under the

supervision of the *All-Russian Association of Russian Volkodavs*. Temperament tests, which are a common and relatively mild form of dog fighting used for breeding purposes, are fairly commonplace.

The American pit bull terrier and English bull terrier are the most common types of dogs used for dog fighting in Russia.

## India

Dog fighting is widely practiced throughout rural India. Indian feudal lords take pride in putting their dogs against a rival's, or they make the dogs fight with bears. However, dog fighting is illegal as defined by Indian law. In addition, it is illegal to possess dogfighting materials such as videos, or to attend an event.

## Great Britain

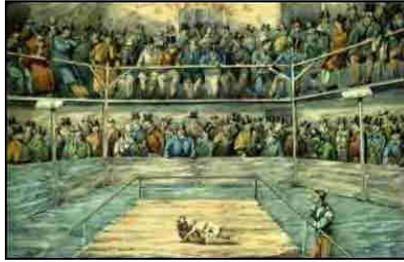
During the time of Roman Britain, there were Pugnaces Britanniae or war dogs, mostly used in battle but later used for dog fighting contests in the amphitheatre. As early as 1154, in the reign of Henry II, bull-baiting and bear-baiting with dogs was a popular amusement.

Breeding allowed for a specialized breed in the form of the now extinct original Old English Bulldog. The contemporary recreation of the breed is called the Olde English Bulldogge.

The Cruelty to Animals Act 1835 in the United Kingdom was the first legislation in the world that made dogfighting illegal. Dog fighting is now illegal in all first world countries and many third world countries. However, dog fighting still occurs across the globe. To combat dog fighting the designation of so-called dangerous dog breeds, Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) has been passed. For those interested in fighting dogs, outlawing their specific breeds encourages them to find substitute breeds suitable for fighting forces then to take their breeds out of the public eye.

Despite periodic dog-fight prosecutions, the illegal canine pit battles continued. Sporting journals of the 18th and 19th centuries depict the Black Country and London as the primary English dog fight centres of the period. Dog fighting was also practiced in many areas of Ireland.

The main dog breeds used today for fighting in the UK are the Irish staffordshire bull terrier, the American pit bull terrier, and less so but not uncommonly the English bull terrier.



**The Pit**

**An old painting by H.Alken**

