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Authorities Seek Information on Illegal Animal Fighting

The Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter is seeking the public's assistance in identifying the parties behind recent instances of illegal animal fighting. A reward for information leading to the arrests and convictions of those responsible is being offered in both cases.

In the past several months, Animal Shelter authorities have found two locations where deceased roosters that appear to have been involved in illegal cockfighting were dumped in rural locations near Watsonville: 43 deceased roosters were found near Shell Road, and 34 deceased roosters were found off Rancho Road. Cockfighting is an illegal blood sport where two roosters have knives attached to their legs, are placed in a ring and fight until one dies.

Within the past week, authorities have also found two approximately six-month-old pit bulls, which appear to have been used as "bait dogs" for dog-fighting purposes. Both were found in the Interlaken area of Watsonville, and have wounds and behavior consistent with being used to train other dogs to fight. Dog-baiting is the setting of game dogs against a chained or confined animal for sport. The dogs bite and tear to subdue the opposing animal by incapacitating or killing it.

"Cockfighting and dogfighting are barbaric rituals that involve egregious animal cruelty and torture," Field Services Manager Todd Stosuy said. "The Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter will work with the District Attorney's Office to prosecute those involved in cockfighting or dogfighting to the fullest extent of the law."

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has offered a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrests and convictions of those responsible. Authorities are asking anyone with information to contact the Animal Shelter at 831-454-7200, ext.1.