



American Veterinary Medical Association Governmental Relations Division

1910 Sunderland Place NW Washington, DC 2036-1642

Phone 202.789.0007 / 800.321.1473 Fax 202.842.4360

www.avma.org

H.R. 366/S. 666 Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act

AVMA Position: Active Pursuit of Passage

Summary:

Introduced by Congressman Tom Marino (PA-10th) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (CT), this bill amends the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to prohibit any person from knowingly attending an animal fighting venture or causing a minor to attend such a venture. Sets civil and criminal penalties for violation.

Background:

- The AWA states, “the term ‘animal fighting venture’ means any event, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, that involves a fight conducted animals for purposes of sport, wagering, or entertainment, except that the term ‘animal fighting venture’ shall not be deemed to include any activity the primary purpose of which involves the use of one or more animals in hunting another animal”.
- State and federal law enforcement agencies often work together to enforce animal fighting laws.
- It is already a federal crime to sponsor or exhibit an animal in an animal fighting venture under the AWA.
- It is illegal in 49 states to be a knowing spectator at an animal fight.

Justification:

- The AVMA has consistently supported federal legislative proposals directed toward prevention of animal fighting during previous Congressional cycles.
- H.R. 366 is consistent with AVMA policy on Animal Fighting which states, “The AVMA condemns fighting events involving animals in which injury or death is intended. The AVMA supports the enforcement of laws against the use and transport of animals and equipment for fighting ventures. Further, the AVMA recommends that animal fighting be considered a felony offense. The AVMA encourages veterinarians to educate the public about the harm caused by animal fighting and to collaborate with law enforcement with respect to recognition and enforcement of applicable laws.” (<https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Animal-Fighting.aspx>)
- While most states have recently adopted stricter laws addressing animal fighting, enforcement is a challenge and combined federal and state efforts are most effective. Targeting not only those participating, but those frequenting these events is necessary to put their organizers out of business.
- Animal fighting has severe consequences for the animals involved, with serious injury and/or death intended.
- In addition to their consequences for animals, animal fights are frequently conducted in conjunction with other illegal activities (e.g., drug trafficking) and can incite violence among spectators coincident with that in the ring.

Current Status:

- H.R. 366: House Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the House Committee on the Judiciary.
- S. 666: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.
- Farm Bill: Similar language to H.R. 366 has been included in the Senate version of the Farm Bill (S. 10), which was introduced by Senator Harry Reid (NV) and referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

AVMA Contact:

Dr. Whitney Miller, Assistant Director, Governmental Relations Division, 202-289-3211, wmiller@avma.org

The AVMA is the recognized voice for the profession, representing over 81,500 member veterinarians. The objective of the AVMA is to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine including its relationship to public health, biological science, and agriculture.