A Look At The Underground World Of Illegal Dogfighting

Society of the United States reported that pit bulls were involved in about two-thirds of all deaths resulting from dog bites in the United States. Many people blame the pit bull attacks on the "natural aggressiveness" of the dogs. However, most experts point fingers at irresponsible owners, who may have abused the dogs or raised them to attack. Experts also tend to agree that if a pit bull is properly raised, he'll make a good house pet, even for children.

If you own, show or weight-pull a pit bull, no problem. But for many years, it has been a felony in Louisiana to stage an organized dogfight. Yet, as illegal and underground as it is, pit bull fighting in south Louisiana remains an occasional, if not somewhat common, occurrence.

But you'll only learn about that on the street, talking to someone like Bob. Talk to the 15th Judicial District Attorney's office (which covers three parishes: Lafayette, Vermilion and Acadia), and veterans there will tell you they've never prosecuted a case for pit bull dogfighting. They don't even recall getting a complaint to investigate a dogfight.

Talk to the Vermilion Parish Sheriff Department (which covers rural towns like Abbeville, Gueydan, Erath, Delcambre, Maurice and Kaplan) and Ray LeMaire will say the same thing. "I've been in office 10 years and I don't think I've had the first complaint in that department," the sheriff says. "I've never had someone report a fight, or rolling, as they call it—rolling the dogs."

Over at the Lafayette Animal Control Center you don't hear much about the pits, either. "In the last three years, I've seen no cases of animals that look like they'd been in an organized fight," says the center's supervisor, Roicy Daoh. "I can recall only a couple of cases where dogs may have been used in fighting," he adds. "There were no open wounds, just scar tissue."

"Dogfighting is taken pretty seriously in this state but it's hard to prosecute," says Hilton Cole, director of the East Baton Rouge Animal Control Center and president of the Louisiana Animal Control Association. "There was a case a few years ago in Tangipahoa Parish. The jury people were absolutely pitiful because they knew the people accused of the dogfighting. And the whole bunch of them got off scot-free.

"They're hard to prosecute, because generally when you drive in, the people run like hell and turn the dogs loose. All you can get are the license plates on their parked cars.

But we don't see any organized pit bull fighting in our parish," Cole affirms. "Because, if there were fights, we'd have busted them."

Bob lights up his third or fourth cigarette. He's only agreeing to talk if he'll get his side heard—the side, he says, that never gets in the news, "I can't say anything bad about a pit bull," he starts. "Except, they're what you make them. In the past, I had a few."

About five months ago, Bob was taking care of more than a few. A breeder, who was one of Bob's good friends, died, leaving a yard of 150 of some of the finest quality pit bull terriers that were selling for about $2,000 a puppy. (An average pit bull puppy sells for about $400 or $500.) That breeder was one of the few really good quality pit bull breeders in state, says Bob.

Not every pit bull is bred to fight. At Cajun Kennels on the Youngsville Highway, where quality American pit bulls have been sold for three generations, Floyd Boudreaux, 59, says he doesn't know about any dogfights going on around here, that he sells his dogs for show and for pets. His son, Guy, who also works with the dogs, says that pit bulls have gotten a bad rap, especially from the media. "What's so bad is that [pit bulls] attracted people in drugs and
According to those who have attended dogfighting events in Lafayette and the surrounding parishes, there are actually only about 40 people who occasionally fight pit bulls as an organized sport. And surprisingly, the majority of those who fight are in their 50s and 60s. But that makes sense for two reasons. Years ago, when this older generation first got into the sport, the issue of its legality wasn’t a push. It wasn’t until 1982 that there was legislation that made dogfighting a crime under the existing animal cruelty act. And at that time, the crime was just a misdemeanor. It became a felony to fight dogs in 1984.

First, it’s like automation when you think of Harley Davids when you think of drugs, and when you think of pit bulls you think of drag. But I base my job on family portraits. I base my job on church,” he says.

“...I think of the sum of the earth, because I raise pit-bulls. But I pay taxes. I have a job. I pay taxes.”

You can’t miss Cajun Kennels. Located right off the road are dozens of doghouses, and chained to each one is a pit bull. The chains are so short the dogs can run just a few feet before being tugged back to their small spot of earth, which has been worn down to dirt. Beyond the doghouses in the background are Boudreaux’s gamecocks, atop their cock houses.

Floyd Boudreaux’s white, wood-frame house is next door to the kennel. Inside, it is typical of a Cajun home. In the living room, there is a crucifix on one wall, an abundance of family portraits scattered around, a big television set, and lots of chairs. One striking difference, however, is a poem about the beauty of chain. One striking difference, however, is a poem about the beauty of chain. One striking difference, however, is a poem about the beauty of chain.

Beyond the doghouses in the background are Boudreaux’s gamecocks, atop their cock houses.

Boudreaux has a reputation for breeding high quality dogs for show and for pets. Unlike many other pit bull breeders in America, his business isn’t conducted in secrecy. Cajun Kennels is out in front in plain view for the public to see and it’s even advertised in pit bull trade magazines and journals.

Boudreaux is also known as a good-natured businessman. Still, he refuses to talk about his business. “There’s nothing in it for me,” he says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21