

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Suspected Cockfighting Operation with International Ties Raided in Butte County, Calif.

The Humane Society of the United States assists Butte County Sheriff's Office in investigation and raid

(May 25, 2011) – The Humane Society of the United States supplied key information that led to the raid of a suspected cockfighting operation in Butte County with alleged ties to international cockfighting interests. The Butte County Sheriff's office executed a search warrant on Wednesday morning at a location near Oroville, Calif. where gamecocks were allegedly bred, trained, fought and sold for fighting purposes.

The Butte County Sheriff's Office arrested three people in today's raid. Randall "Speedy" Gonzales (DOB: 10/31/50) and his wife Ruby Gonzales (DOB: 1/31/53), the reported owners of the "RANCHO GONZALES" operation, and Edmond Rosario (DOB: 12/2/60), a Filipino migrant worker, were arrested. Randall "Speedy" Gonzales was charged with Possession of Game Cocks for Fighting, Cruelty to Animals and Possession of Fighting Bird Equipment. Ruby Gonzales was charged with Possessing Game Cocks for Fighting. Edmond Rosario was charged with Possession of Game Cocks for Fighting. Authorities seized an estimated 300 roosters and found dozens of weapons and international cockfighting magazines on the property.

"Cockfighting enterprises drag down entire communities and relegate untold thousands of roosters to brutal injuries and deaths in the ring," said Eric Sakach, senior law enforcement specialist for The HSUS. "The Humane Society of the United States commends the Butte County Sheriff's Department for taking allegations of cockfighting crimes seriously."

Since 2008, there have been more than 110 law enforcement incidences involving cockfighting in 35 of California's 58 counties. More than 21,000 birds have been found dead or alive in connection with the bloodsport during that time. The HSUS is supporting SB 425 and SB 426, sponsored by Sen. Ronald Calderon, D – Montebello, to strengthen state cockfighting laws by setting mandatory minimum fines and allowing for profit forfeiture following cockfighting charges. SB 426 will allow landlords to evict tenants using their property for animal fighting, or keeping animals for use in animal fighting. Both bills have passed the Senate and await consideration by the Assembly.

In addition, Butte County Animal Control and the Northwest SPCA provided personnel and assistance in documenting and handling animals seized during the raid.

The HSUS offers rewards of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person involved in illegal animal fighting. Anyone with information about animal fighting criminals is asked to call 877-TIP-HSUS (847-4787). Tipsters' identities will be protected.

Facts

- Cockfighting is outlawed in all 50 states and is punished as a felony in 39.

- The editorial boards of the *Bakersfield Californian*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *San Diego Union-Tribune* recently have endorsed tougher laws against cockfighting in California.
- It is not a felony under California law to be a spectator at a cockfight. This makes it difficult for law enforcement to charge most people caught in cockfighting raids as participants routinely abandon their birds and claim they were only present to watch the fights.
- Tougher laws in border states like Arizona and Oregon make California a destination of choice for cockfighters in the region.

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Media Contact: Katie Jarl: 713-516-7892 kjarl@humanesociety.org

Butte County Sheriff's Office Contact: Detective Sgt. Jason Hail: 530-538-7671

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the Web at humanesociety.org.