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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN, LAW ENFORCEMENT, THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES TEAM UP TO COMBAT ANIMAL FIGHTING IN ILLINOIS

Reward Program Offers Up to \$5,000 for Tips Leading to Animal Fighting Convictions

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) announced a reward program today to strengthen law enforcement's ability to combat animal fighting including dogfighting and cockfighting. The reward program, administered by The HSUS, offers up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any people involved in illegal animal fighting. Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, Chicago Police Department Deputy Superintendent Steve Peterson and Crime Stoppers Chairman George McDade also joined in this announcement. The HSUS reward program is designed to lead to valuable tips about animal fighting.

"Animal fighting is a cruel, violent crime that occurs too frequently," Madigan said. "Studies show that youth who engage in animal fighting become immune to the violence and often go on to commit violent crimes. I am pleased to lend my support to this reward program to help raise awareness of this terrible crime."

"The people of Illinois are fortunate to have a champion against animal fighting in Attorney General Madigan," said Jordan Matyas, Illinois State Director for The HSUS. "The Humane Society of the United States is proud to partner with her on raising awareness of this important program that can put animal fighters behind bars."

Individuals with information about animal fighting are encouraged to call their local law enforcement authorities, animal control agency or Crime Stoppers from anywhere in Illinois at 1-800-535-STOP (7867). Crime Stoppers will immediately communicate the tip to the local law enforcement agency. The financial rewards will be provided by The HSUS once it is confirmed that the information provided to law enforcement led to an arrest and conviction.

Crime Stoppers tipsters can choose to remain anonymous and still be eligible for a financial reward through an identifying tip number system. If the tip leads to an arrest and conviction, the tipster can contact Crime Stoppers, who will work with law enforcement to confirm the conviction and with The HSUS to secure the financial reward.

"Because the people operating these fights operate in the shadows, I'm grateful for any opportunity we have to shed light on this horrific - yet growing - crime," said Sheriff Dart. "We're seeing more children attending these fights, as well as adults who, more and more, see nothing wrong with wagering money on two dogs fighting to the death. These fights go on in the city, suburbs and in rural areas. That's why reward programs like this are so important in helping send a strong message to everyone that dog fighting can't be tolerated."

Dog fighting and cockfighting are both Class 4 felonies in Illinois, punishable by one to three years in prison and/or a maximum \$50,000 fine.

"Crimes against animals perpetuate an environment of violence and turn into crimes against innocent victims," said Chicago Police Superintendent Jody P. Weis. "Targeting and prosecuting these inhumane and violent operations will make our communities safer with fewer dangerous offenders on the streets."

"These violent events set the stage for drug dealing, gambling and gang activity beyond the animal cruelty of the dog fights. It is not a victimless crime. By encouraging people to stop this animal cruelty we can help end the cycle of violence that happens right

in local neighborhoods," McDade said. "We are pleased to team up with The Humane Society of the United States and the Illinois Attorney General and encourage people to pick up the phone and call us."

Animal fighting "contests" are abhorrent spectacles in which animals are pitted in bloody duels — often to the death — for human entertainment. These cruel events are often coupled with spawning for other criminal activities, including drugs and violence, dragging down entire communities. A Chicago Police Department study showed that 65 percent of people charged with animal abuse crimes — including dogfighting — were also charged with violent crimes against people.

The HSUS reward program has been made possible through a grant by the Holland M. Ware Charitable Foundation.

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 10.5 million Americans, or one of every 30. 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.

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