REPORT: THE DEADLY, UNDERGROUND WORLD OF DOGFIGHTING ON FACEBOOK

A Snapshot of Facebook's Marketplace for Cruelty
Lady Freethinker
May 26, 2019
Promotion of Dogfighting on Facebook

- 2039 posts
- 150 groups, pages & profiles
- 160,563 members/followers on top 5 groups/pages alone
Introduction

Dogfighting is illegal throughout most of the world, yet it remains a common activity in underground communities. In fact, dogfighting has been outlawed in the United Kingdom for more than 180 years (since the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835 of England and Wales) and is a felony crime in all 50 U.S. states.

Despite the widespread prohibition of this cruel activity, illegal dogfighting on social media platforms is easy to find, facilitated by the rapid growth and widespread use of the Internet, and the difficulties enforcement agencies face in tackling this largely hidden crime.

To help elude law enforcement while growing their market, much of today’s promotion of the deadly activity has migrated to social media. Facebook has become ground zero for discussing the merits of particular dogs and breeders, often on closed forums. Many of the pages and groups use coded terminology the average reader might not understand. A dog could be described as a "grand champion" with five wins (Gr Ch) or a "champion" with three wins (Ch), or a promoter may reference the box the dogs fight in (4x4).

As Facebook has grown into a major platform for advocacy, news, and even commerce, Facebook has a responsibility in policing the content on its platform to ensure a safe and legal environment. However, as the prevalence of posts illegally trading dogs for fighting and the promotion of dogfighting as a sport shows, Facebook is failing to protect animals from this cruel activity while also failing to enforce its own policies against crime and violence.
What is Dogfighting?

Dogfighting is the premeditated and cruel practice of inciting two or more dogs to attack and fight each other until one of them is either killed or too injured to continue fighting. It is a thriving underground activity in both urban and rural areas around the world.

Dogs often suffer terrible injuries including broken bones, ripped flesh, torn muscles, and severe bruising. Most dogs live in miserable conditions, caged or kept on heavy chains for their entire lives.

Dogfighting is outlawed in most countries around the world – including the UK, United States, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, South Africa, Morocco, India, and Canada.
How Does This Affect Me?

Animal abuse has close links to other criminal activities, acts of violence, and abuse of vulnerable people. Where animal fighting is allowed to take place, other illegal and dangerous activities will likely flourish.

A 2018 study found that more than 73% of animal cruelty offenders had prior or subsequent arrests; 60% of offenders had been arrested for violence against humans.
Facebook users' activities (on groups, pages, and posts) are regulated by existing Facebook policies: the Community Standards Policy and the Commerce Policy. However, Facebook is failing to enforce these policies.

In a survey of more than 150 Facebook pages, profiles, and groups, LFT’s investigator found that the top 5 sources alone had more than 2,000 posts promoting or advocating for dogfighting and/or the sale of animals. These top 5 groups and pages also had a combined 160,563 followers.

These posts violated Facebook’s own policies that prohibit criminal activity, violence, and the sale of animals. Yet Facebook has failed to take significant action.
Posts in Violation of Facebook Policies

The following is a sample of posts directly violating Facebook’s Community Standards Policy and/or Commerce Policy. Facebook must act to eliminate this content from its platform to protect dogs from deadly cruelty and prevent criminal activity from establishing a foothold online.
Quiza la imagen sea algo fuerte para algunos. Pero aqui la importancia de tener a los perros en cadena o separados a tiempo. Con 7 semanas de vida, un descuido de 35 min, y un hermano mato al otro. Cuando la genética es mas fuerte no hay nada que se pueda hacer.

#APBT
Maybe the image is something strong for some. But here the importance of having dogs in chain or separated in time. With 7 weeks of life, an oversight of 35 min, and one brother killed the other. When genetics is stronger there is nothing that can be done.

#APBT
Rate this translation
HUA DEL GRAN BÉKA DÁNDOLE DURO A LA CINTA
See Translation

Akin Kennel’s Ch. Maxim 36W 1XGL, 10 Point POR / ROM
Sire: Noko x Sr. Ch. Bady Junior 6XW ROM x Dam: Akin Kennel’s Ch. Romy 36W 1XGL
Rodboy x Jocko x Jaap

See original Rate this translation
From October 2018 to February 2019, periodic surveys were conducted on Facebook to find groups and pages promoting or advocating dogfighting, or selling or trafficking animals used for dogfighting. The Facebook keyword search function was utilized, based on commonly used keywords associated with dogfighting (ie. 4x4, American Pitbull Terrier, apbt kennels). Additionally, information was gathered from similar pages and groups suggested by Facebook.

Once groups and pages had been identified, they were then searched for similar keywords. This helped identify specific profiles promoting dogfighting. Any group, page, or profile with posts promoting or advocating for dogfighting, showing graphic dogfighting photos or videos, breeding American Pitbull Terriers while promoting their fighting bloodlines/titles, and/or selling American Pitbull Terriers while promoting their fighting bloodlines/titles or selling in a group or on a page that promotes or advocates for dogfighting, was then documented.
Utilizing the existing Facebook policies as guidelines, posts were flagged as violating the policies if they included any of the following:

- A caption or text on the photo/video with fight titles commonly used in dog fighting and/or fight details (ie. 2xW, 1:13 RIP, ROM, POR, CH, GR CH)
- A photo/video of dogs "in the box" or pre-/post-/active fights "in the box"
- A photo/video of “the yard,” where fighting dogs are forced to live outdoors on chains, often in factory-like conditions
- A link in the caption to a pedigree containing fight titles and/or details
- A caption that contained praise or remarks that speak positively of the violence of dog fighting
- The selling of American Pitbull Terriers in groups or on pages/profiles with posts that promote or speak positively of dogfighting
- The selling of American Pitbull Terriers with captions detailing dogfighting bloodlines and/or links to pedigrees containing fight titles
- Acts of physical harm committed against animals
- Staged animal vs. animal fights
Results

2039 Posts

From the five top Facebook groups and pages alone, LFT's investigator identified 2,039 posts that explicitly promoted dogfighting or were trafficking in animals used for fighting. These posts were in direct violation of Facebook’s Community Standards Policy and/or Commerce Policy.

150 Groups

LFT's investigator documented 150 pages, groups, and profiles that were actively promoting dogfighting or were engaged in the sale of animals for fighting.

160,563 Members

The five top Facebook groups and pages identified by LFT's investigator had a combined following of 160,563 members.
Existing Facebook Policies

Facebook maintains a **Community Standards Policy** and a **Commerce Policy**, which LFT's investigator used as guidelines to determine which posts to document in this report.
Community Standards Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violent &amp; Criminal Behavior</th>
<th>Objectionable Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Facebook prohibits violent and</td>
<td>The publication of violent and graphic content is prohibited. Including imagery of</td>
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<tr>
<td>criminal behavior (ie. kennels or</td>
<td>violence committed against real people or animals with comments or captions that</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups that fight dogs).</td>
<td>contain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Calls to action or advocating of</td>
<td>● Enjoyment of suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the following are also prohibited:</td>
<td>● Erotic response to suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Acts of physical harm</td>
<td>● Remarks that speak positively of the violence; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committed against animals</td>
<td>● Remarks indicating the poster is sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Staged animal vs. animal fights</td>
<td>footage for sensational viewing pleasure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Commerce Policy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Prohibited Content</th>
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Posts may not promote the sale of any animals (live animals, pets, livestock, any part of an animal)
LFT’s investigator reported 26 posts deemed to violate Facebook’s own policies, including those that depicted graphic violence. However, Facebook declined to remove all but six of them.
Recommended Actions

The results of this report clearly show that the promotion of dogfighting and the trade in animals for fighting on Facebook is rampant and needs immediate attention and action. With hundreds of groups and thousands of posts promoting dogfighting on their platform, Facebook must take immediate steps to protect animals from harm.
Demand Facebook Stop Ignoring Dogfighting and Other Acts of Animal Cruelty

Facebook is an enormous social media platform used by billions of people around the world. As a global tool for communication, advocacy, news, and commerce, Facebook has a responsibility to block illegal content and ensure that users adhere to its own Community Standards and Commerce Policies.

In allowing these posts to remain on its platform, Facebook is helping perpetuate violent criminal acts against animals.

Please join Lady Freethinker in urging Facebook to pro-actively work on eliminating this dangerous content from all pages, groups, and profiles so that they are no longer complicit in animal cruelty.

CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION