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July 9th, 2009 by Dr. Phil



AP Photo

A [news story](#) I read this week made me sick to my stomach. It states that authorities have arrested about 30 men in three states for running a dogfighting ring. They also seized about 350 pit bulls.

I had a member of my staff call to find out what exactly those men were up to, and we learned that these men allegedly have spent years training pit bulls to viciously fight other dogs. The pit bulls were reportedly made to square off, two at a time, in a wooden box — 12×12 feet long, and the walls, two-feet high — and then go at it, viciously ripping at one another's flesh, even disemboweling their opponents if they had the chance.

Absolutely disgusting.

I'm sorry (OK, I'm not *really* sorry), but I am fresh out of compassion and forgiveness when it comes to those who abuse, neglect or exploit defenseless animals. I think anyone who participates in dogfighting or similar animal abuse is the lowest scum in the world. Pit bulls, for instance, are not evil animals. If properly socialized, they can be the most loyal, friendly pets on the planet. They'll jump up on your couch and lick you all day long, sleep in your lap and play for hours.

But these dogfighters allegedly tortured their pit bulls to make them more aggressive. They reportedly starved and beat them, put cocaine on their teeth, shot them up with steroids and hung smaller dogs and cats from a pole; making their pit bulls leap up to grab the smaller animals and tear them apart.

And, if a pit bull didn't become aggressive enough? The dogfighters are said to have unabashedly killed them by drowning, shooting or sometimes even electrocuting them.

In my personal opinion, these dogfighters — and anyone else who abuses animals, especially for entertainment or profit — are lowlifes. They are as cruel and as vicious as they come, and I think authorities should drop the entire jail house on these jerks until they rot. Granted, [I'm a professed animal lover](#) and animal rights advocate. I swear to you, if I saw someone hurting my dog Maggie (or any other animal for that matter), I would hate to think what I would do.



I have to be honest. I see no redeeming value to these people who breed and train dogs to fight. I know, I know, with a career in psychology, I'm supposed to be understanding. Sorry, but I will say it

again: I'm fresh out of any sympathy for these guys.

What I do know is that people with those kinds of problems rarely get better. They might act a little more humane after therapy, but in the end, therapy often makes them harder to spot or deal with than before their treatment, because it teaches them what they are expected to say, so they can look like they have "improved."

What gets me the most is that these losers are probably not going to rot in jail. The outrageous fact is that, because of limited state and federal laws, dogfighters rarely go to prison for longer than a year or two, if that. The country's most infamous dogfighter, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback [Michael Vick](#), just got out of prison after a measly two-year sentence, and there is even the possibility he could be playing football this fall.

Wow, what punishment! There's a good chance Vick only got that kind of time because he is famous and because it was such a high-profile case that it couldn't be ignored. Otherwise, he might have just gotten off with a fine.

Vick says he's reformed, but I have seen no impressive evidence that he seriously has done anything to rehabilitate himself. And I don't see any other dogfighters suddenly giving up their dogs and saying they realize what they have done is wrong. The [United States Humane Society](#) says that as many as 40,000 people still participate in dogfighting in this country. That's a staggering number.

I am grateful that there was a major investigation into one of the country's dogfighting rings that eventually led to some arrests. So kudos to the law enforcement agencies that pursued these people; I hope they stay after it. We need to do everything to put these sickos away. And we need to make our politicians change the law so that dogfighters pay a heavy price.

I support many groups that fight for tougher enforcement against dogfighting like the Humane Society and the [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#). I hope you will, too.

Tags: [Dogfighting](#), [Michael Vick](#), [pets](#)

This entry was posted on Thursday, July 9th, 2009 at 5:03 pm and is filed under [Outrageous](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

## 66 Responses to "The Dog Torturers"

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1. *Sue* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 10:27 am](#)

Anyone who abuses animals is the lowest of the low. Their karma will come around. If only they could suffer the same fate as these dogs! I will the dogs in my prayers.

2. *Elaine* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 1:01 pm](#)

Kudos, Dr. Phil, Kudos! More needs to be done to these "low life" people that get a kick out of living creatures being tortured. I love people, animals and life and I am for implementing the same treatment to humans that they inflict onto defensive animals! I would be first in line to conduct the treatment. Turn these poor abused animals onto the people that put them in these terrible situations! These people will get "theirs" in due time!

3. *Morgan* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 1:32 pm](#)

It's interesting: I was having this very conversation with my b/f the other day. As a huge animal advocate, it disgusts me that animals who have a heart, a brain, breathe the same air, have the same blood, and feel the same feelings are treated as 'less than' because they are different from us. But humans have a problem with that, don't they? If we do not look the same, then the individual should be treated as less.

I have a python (5 yrs old) whom I love more than anything. He is smart, kind, loving, gentle, and emanates pure joy in everything he does. Everyone who meets him feels lighter in his presence and he is truly a gift to this world. But, because he does not fit the stereotype of the fuzzy, long-eared, drooling pet, I (me) have even been called 'evil' for having a snake, which to me is a lack of respect towards my love for him.

The abuse we face as a society tears at concept of 'being human' as people get lost in ego and forget that we all come from the same source energy (call it the Universe, God, or whatever) and that we are spiritual beings having a physical

experience (animals included). I truly believe that we need to redefine what it means to call ourselves a 'human being' and remember that 'human' (the physical experiences we all have) and 'being' (our spiritual centre) sometimes get lost. Perhaps if we focused less on who is 'worth more' and who is worthy, we'd begin to see that the joy we can lend to others (animals being high on that list) will only serve to bring us joy with unboundless potential in return, however it is delivered.

This kindness then extends to our responsibility on this earth: To care for those beings around us; to fill them up and to provide them with love and self-esteem, rather than tearing them down for a mass of vibrating particles that have taken the form of money through our perception – something so fleeting that will eventually be recycled into something else. We need to redefine success, as you say, Dr Phil, and look at what success means as a human being.

4. *Judith* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 1:54 pm](#)

I want to mention that, in most of these dogfighting cases, the perpetrators have used stolen neighborhood dogs (or paid for stolen neighborhood dogs) to use as "bait" for the fighting dogs. Do your utmost to protect your dogs from being stolen.

The news also said that, in this latest huge case, when the humans were "done" with the dogs who "didn't fight so well", or the dogs that lost, or the dogs that were used as bait, they "popped the lids on the septic tank and just threw the dogs in alive to die a horrible death".

Seems like a proper punishment for the perpetrators.

5. *ANNE* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 2:02 pm](#)

IT TAKES AN UNUSUALLY COLD HEART TO TREAT ANY LIVING THING IN SUCH A CRUEL MANNER. I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER HOW THEY TREAT THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO THEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY DON'T BEHAVE THE WAY THESE INSANE (INHUMANE) CREATURES EXPECT THEM TO. I HOPE GOD HAS A SPECIAL PLACE FOR THESE CRUEL CREATURES WHERE PIT BULLS ARE IN CHARGE.

6. *Blgspc* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 2:39 pm](#)

Hi Linda!

Caesar Milan- the Dog Whisperer- reminds people to know the breed of the dog before you take it home. Pit Bulls aren't 'Bad' or 'Vicious' dogs, though ALOT of the varieties of Bull Dogs are regarded as 'Gladiators'. That DOESN'T mean that they are mean. ALOT depends on how they are raised and handled. I've seen tiny little dogs assail AND actually BITE Caesar's Pit Bulls and they just leave the offender for Caesar to handle.

In fact, growing up, my Dad got a Boxer Bull puppy for us when my twin and I were about 8 years old. Skippy- that's what we named him- was EXCEPTIONALLY gentle. In fact, Skippy NEVER bit OR HARMED anyone, EVER. Skippy was always gentle with kids. He was, however, one of the BEST guard dogs that we ever had! If anyone he didn't know came close to my father's property or either of us he got his hackles up, began growling, positioned himself between us and the person and began behaving like he was going to shred the person. That was as far as that went though. The instant we acknowledged that person Skippy became friendly and welcoming. Even when we weren't home, people complained that Skippy seemed MEAN. My father would ask, "Did he hurt you?" The answer was always 'NO'. Skippy just like setting BOUNDARIES with a 'show of force', without ever using force!!

Brenda

P. S. Oh! Dr. Phil! You should have Caesar Milan- the Dog Whisperer- on if you decide to do a show on this! His motto is, 'I balance Dogs and I TRAIN people.' That's what he does, too!

7. *Amanda* says:

[July 11, 2009 at 2:49 pm](#)

I have a 10 yr old pitbull. My husband has had him since he was a pup. We also have a 5 monmth old shih tzu. Our pit adores the shih tzu and our one year old son. Because Chi Chi (shih tzu) is a pup still, she has a chewing and nipping problem that I amn currently working on her with. In all of Rowdy's 10 yrs he has never shown agression toward any being or animal.

I wish that Vick could have realized the more damage he has done not only to the dogs involved but pits everywhere. Its sad that they have a bad rep and now because of a famous person's mistakes and a few common idiots, these dogs are

feared.

Utah is giving pits a second chance (Salt Lake County anyways) in offering educational classes sponsored by the ASPCA, and the Animal Sanctuary that Vick's dogs are rehabilitating at.

8. [Jennifer](#) says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 2:59 pm](#)

I think they should start hanging them like they do those little dogs and cats. Maybe they won't think that is such a good idea the next time. Of course I am from Texas and I feel like it says in the good book an Eye for an Eye. Maybe a few of those dogs need to have a chance at a few of those guys. Rub a little old dead dog blood on them and put them in with a dog one of the biggest ones they own. And leave them for a while and let the dog take its fair share out of his ass for a change . I no that sounds ugly ,but ugly is as ugly does and this man has done ugly by doing this poor animal this way. Because most of the time they end up killing these dogs because you can not change them back to the way they use to be before these guys got a hold of them. So why not let these dogs have a chance at them before they end up being put down. Let them at least have there eye for the eye these's guys have taken their lives from them . At least let them take a few chunks of hyde off of them. It is not like they do not deserve it.

I just can not see where these people come from . They must not have any feelings at all. They can not have because if they did the first time that dog looked in their eyes with those big old brown eyes would be the end of all the fighting thoughts. Dogs already have a sadness in their eyes so they can win you over in anything. So with that how can they look at them and then still harm them. I watch the animal channel and I can not watch parts when they show where a animal is hungry or hurt. Cause I just cry with that animal or for it.

I think I like animals sometimes more then I do people . Dogs can have a bad day but they do not show it to anyone they wag their tails and come running to you. Even if they did have a bad day. Can you say that about a human.

Thank Jenn in Texas

9. [DEBORAH GIERACH](#) says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 3:08 pm](#)

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE MIND SET OF PEOPLE WHO ENJOY WATCHING THEIR DOGS BITE AND GET BITTEN. WE INHERITED MY SON'S DOG AFTER HE PASSED AWAY, ALREADY HAD A VERY LARGE BOXER AND HAVE JUST RECENTLY ACQUIRED A 15 MONTH OLD BOXER; APPARENTLY, WE WILL ALSO BE GETTING IN A FEW WEEKS MY DAUGHTERS BOXER SINCE SHE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO HAVE IT IN WASHINGTON, D.C. WHERE SHE IS MOVING FOR LAW SCHOOL. THAT IS 4 DOGS ALL BIGGER THEN 50 LBS. WHEN WE ONLY PLANNED ON 1. I WOULDN'T TRADE MY LIFE WITH 4 DOGS FOR ANYTHING. WHEN MY SON DIED IN JUNE 2007 THE BOXER WE HAD STUCK TO ME LIKE GLUE, HE HELPED ME GET THROUGH WHAT WAS EASILY THE HARDEST TIME OF MY LIFE AND I LOVE HIM FOR THAT AND MANY OTHER THINGS. HOW CAN HUMAN BEINGS BE SO CALLOUS.

10. [JBC200](#) says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 3:33 pm](#)

Dear Dr Phil

This is such a crime. I am a real dog /animal lover...I cannot bear to think of cruelty to animals. I could hardly read your blog but did because this evil is in the world. I wish I could save all the abused animals out there. If there is anything I can do to help prevent this. I cant comprehend such cruelty and this comes from the bottom of my heart.

11. [Janet Davies](#) says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 3:38 pm](#)

If Falcons (or any team) take Vick back I say we launch a protest! I am an in home pet sitter and I love animals and having the privilage of taking care them while their owners are at work or on holiday. If I saw anyone abusing an animal I would go at them like a fighting pit bull! GRRRRR!

12. [Michele Crouse, CDBC, CPDT](#) says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 4:05 pm](#)

Here is a great video of the progress of one of Mike Vick's dogs.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwcklYDCVMo>

LOVE Dr. Phil! You are the man! Thanks you for writing this article on dog fighting. I'm a bull breed advocate. It is getting harder and harder for us to own this breed because of irresponsible owners! Cities all over the united states are trying to ban our dogs. My little staffy bull, which is on the breed ban list, is a registered therapy dog and LOVES children. I visit the life skills classes with her at schools.

I wish that you would do a show on BSL. That is what I fight against.....

I have a huge amount of respect for you, in my business as a dog trainer I have to deal with what is at the other end of the leash and by watching your show I have been able to learn a lot more about human behavior, especially when you are talking to parent about children. It relates a lot to dog training!

Thanks again for doing this article and everything else you do.....

Michele

13. *Tracey* says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 4:13 pm](#)

I think these people should get what they did to this very unique dogs, I am a dog lover and have been since a child NO DOG disvers this kind oOf treatment at all. These so called people SHOULD be hung by thier toe nails and see how it feels and just think of the reaction they would have!!!! These JERKS desiver what they get times 10 if not more!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

14. *Karen* says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 4:22 pm](#)

Most pit bulls are loyal friendly dogs and get a bad rap. With all my experience at an animal shelter I can, however, say this: certain breeds tend to get "kennel crazy" and want to fight with other dogs after a period of time. Unfortunately, with pit bulls, it's usually about 4 days. Once they show aggression they are no longer adoptable (unless a rescue takes them and they are ALWAYS full) and end up being euthanized. My heart breaks for them because I know they have been good family members previously. And then there are the dogs that were adopted to screened applicants that are neglected, abandoned or come back to us aggressive. Is it fair that we humans screw them up and they pay the price? Hardly. I would like to see animal abuse (and widen the definition) a felony in all 50 states and people actually PROSECUTED for it. Many times it is pled down to a misdemeanor or not prosecuted at all unless a vet gets involved. And even they get frustrated by a district attorney's reluctance to prosecute. Then, if it actually gets to court, they get a slap on the hand and told not to do it again. What is wrong with our society?? Have we created a population of sociopaths? Where is our sense of right and wrong, decency toward all living things, morals and even common courtesy? My children were taught from the start the correct way to hold and treat an animal and corrected/punished if they did not follow the rules. They are both huge animal lovers today. I think there are many excuses for why society is the way it is but it boils down to this: lack of parenting and a lack of taking responsibility for our actions. I asked a psychiatrist friend of mine if there were more violent crimes today or if we just heard about more because of the greater media coverage and accessibility to news. He told me that without a doubt there is more and worse violent crime today. Is it any wonder that poor defenseless animals are mistreated when we treat each other that way? I have no use for anyone who mistreats either humans or animals and I will make it my mission to see them prosecuted. Oh, and I'd prosecute back-yard breeders, puppy mills, and pet stores for any inhumane conditions too. As far as I'm concerned they are criminals too.

15. *Bianca Castafiore* says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 4:53 pm](#)

Dr. Phil, thank you. Thank you for once again braving the storm of contrary public opinion and tired popular values — for speaking out against that difficult-to-categorize-as-evil issue of animal torture.

What was once an illusory grey is now a glaringly obvious bad, bad thing.

No doubt, you (and your beautiful family) risk great personal injury and negative press by going public with your controversial love of dogs (and anything which breathes or has any marketing value whatsoever); Your courageous stand against animal exploitation (especially that pesky torture and death-for-sport — we all know "sport" means tennis!) is just more proof positive that you have your finger on the pulse of right-and-wrong.

Thank God.  
Your everloving disciple,  
Bianca Castafiore

<http://prof-de-rien.blogspot.com>

16. *Hermine Stover* says:  
[July 11, 2009 at 5:14 pm](#)

well the thing is you do not have to force the American Pit Bull Terrier to fight, you do not have to train it by feeding it kitties, this would be like training Mohammed Ali by having him beat up girl scouts. the gamebred APBT LOVES to fight. if it were not for the publicity given to dogfighting by the cults called PETA, H\$U\$ and various other organizations—who do very little for animal well being, but who do very well for themselves financially, hardly anyone outside of obscure rural places would even have KNOWN that dog matching ever existed. I notice that most of the folks who post here write as if they are well schooled in the history of the American Pit Bull Terrier and how the dogs were trained to fight. But they are repeating myths spread by the H\$U\$ and PETA, two of the best paid animal based cults imaginable, who AGAIN, do very little FOR animals and believe a death is better than what they consider a substandard life. We have now reached a point where expertise is repeating what you read on the internet, not just about dogs, but yes, in this case, just about dogs. But what do I know? I am only a third generation dog person. and despite my breed, not a dog fighter at all.

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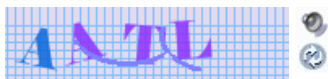
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