

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH - DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMS  
VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES CONTROL**

## **Cockfighting**

Cockfighting probably began in Asia, thousands of years ago. The fighting cock is a breed of domestic chicken which probably originated from jungle fowl in Southeast Asia. The sport came to ancient Greece and Rome by way of India and China. It spread throughout Europe. During the 1600's, the sport became popular in England, where the training and breeding of fighting cocks became an important industry. It was prohibited by the British Parliament in 1849. It is illegal in most of the United States, in Canada, and in many other countries. Cockfighting is still legal in Louisiana and parts of New Mexico, where it is a billion dollar-a-year industry. Though many countries and states have banned or restricted cockfighting, the laws are not always strictly enforced and illegal matches are often held privately.

Cockfighting is a popular public sport in Spain, Latin America, and parts of Asia. Cockfighting is a sport in which two gamecocks (fighting roosters) battle each other. The specially trained gamecocks are placed in a pit, or on a stage, to fight each other. The cocks are placed beak to beak and then released, fighting until one is killed, can fight no longer, or refuses to fight. Often the cocks are equipped with silver or steel spurs. Betting on the outcome of fights is usual.

Its practitioners deride suggestions it is cruel. They defend it as a combination of art, chivalry and spirit. Champions of the sport point out that man plays a vital role in keeping the tradition alive. It is the owner who has the experience to select the right bird and to see its hidden qualities. Then a training program, tailor-made for each animal, has to be worked out. It is considered a man's sport. Gamecocks are specially bred to achieve physical power, speed of movement, courage, and the killer instinct. They usually are brightly colored and have long spurs on their legs. But breeders generally trim the spurs down, and attach artificial spurs to the gamecocks' legs. These spurs are usually fitted with razor-sharp steel blades or with gaffs, which resemble three-inch-long, curved ice picks. The birds use them to rip and tear at their opponents.

A cockfight takes place in an enclosed pit, usually outdoors. Spectators place bets on their favorite gamecocks. At the start of the fight, handlers hold their birds firmly and allow them to peck at each other. When the birds are angry, they are released and start to fight.

The birds cannot escape from the fight, regardless of how exhausted or injured they become. Common injuries include punctured lungs, broken bones, and pierced eyes. A cockfight usually results in the death of one of the birds; sometimes it ends in the death of both. A typical cockfight can last anywhere from several minutes to more than half an hour.

Today there are web pages that include international cock fight schedules, farm recommendations and a page for pit masters.

