

## Landmark dog fighting case prosecuted by RSPCA

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In the Adelaide Magistrates Court today, a 39-year-old Hillcrest man Benn Hamilton pleaded guilty to 12 charges relating to organised dog fighting and was sentenced to 7 months Imprisonment for his crimes.

In the landmark case for South Australia - the first successfully prosecuted matter under new amendments to the Animal Welfare Act enacted in October 2015 - His Honour Magistrate Millard also handed down to Hamilton an Order forbidding ownership of any animals indefinitely.

In August 2016, RSPCA Inspectors seized six dogs, injectable anabolic steroids and equipment used for training and conditioning dogs for fighting from Mr Hamilton's Hillcrest property, including laptops, DVDs, electric shock collars, a treadmill, and apparatus for the forced breeding of fighting dogs. After a six-month investigation, charges were laid on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

Today, Hamilton plead guilty to the following charges:

- Six counts of keeping an animal for the purpose of using the animal in organised animal fights;
- One count of organising an organised animal fight;
- One count of being in possession of implements for the purpose of training the animal to fight another animal including treadmill and chain with weights;
- One count of being in possession of implements for the purpose of protecting the animal in a fight with another animal including two chest plates designed to protect dogs while training to fight;
- One count of being in possession of drugs to be administered to an animal for the purpose of assisting the animal to fight another animal, including injectable anabolic steroids, and;
- Two counts of using an electrical shock collar on an animal.

RSPCA South Australia's Chief Inspector Ms Andrea Lewis said the gaol sentence reflected the community's outrage for the appalling actions in this matter.

*"An immediate gaol sentence and indefinite ban on owning any animals is fitting for the deliberate, deceptive and cruel actions of this individual,"* Ms Lewis said.

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*“This matter has been taken seriously by our courts and demonstrates that society will not tolerate animals being treated in this manner.”*

The maximum penalty for anyone engaging in illegal organised animal fights is \$50,000 or up to 4 years imprisonment.

The six dogs seized were bred specifically for fighting and not taken from the community. Unfortunately, due to the treatment and training by Mr Hamilton, the dogs were unable to be safely rehabilitated after significant efforts by RSPCA staff and specialised behavioural veterinarians. Due to no fault of their own, the dogs had been bred to fight to the death and could not be released into the community.

RSPCA South Australia encourage anybody with information about dog fighting or animal cruelty to contact us on our 24 hour cruelty hotline 1300 4 777 22.

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