

Dogfighting suspected in Muncie

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Author: Werner, Nick

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nwerner@muncie.gannett.com

MUNCIE -- The mauled condition of a brown pit bull found in a northside Dumpster has authorities convinced the animal died in a dog fight.

The dog is the first obvious evidence of dogfighting in Muncie since early 2005 when in separate incidents a dead pit bull was discovered with its snout taped shut behind an abandoned restaurant and two men were arrested for staging a fight.

The illegal blood sport has gone relatively unnoticed since then, but that did not mean the problem was eradicated, according to Jill Dolon, president of Unconditional Love Foundation, an organization dedicated to battling animal fighting in Delaware County.

"It's an underground thing," she said.

The pit bull was discovered around 6:30 p.m. Tuesday by police in an apartment complex Dumpster at 4526 W. Woods Edge Lane.

Someone reported seeing a man in an Oldsmobile Alero with chrome rims dump a suspicious bag that contained something furry, according to police reports.

Responding officers found a pit bull, estimated at 8 months old and about 30 pounds, with cut and puncture wounds across much of its body.

The fatal wound was most likely a broken neck suffered at the jaws of a much larger dog, Dolon and Muncie Animal Shelter Supt. Karen Gibson both said.

Dogfighting is a crime that acts as a barometer for other societal ills, including gambling, trafficking of illegal guns and drugs, and violence against people, Dolon said.

"There's a big connection between animal abuse and human violence" she said. "Animal issues are not really just animal issues."

Experts in animal abuse classify dog fighters into different categories.

At the top are organized professionals, often rural men like the infamous Floyd Boudreaux who study the pedigree of their animals as closely as a Kentucky horse farmer studies thoroughbreds. Boudreaux, known as the "don of dogfighting," is a prolific Louisiana breeder responsible for some of the most sought-after pit bull bloodlines.

At the bottom of dogfighting hierarchy are urban street fighters.

Many dog fighters found in Muncie would likely fall into this category, said John Goodwin, deputy manager for animal fighting issues with the Humane Society of the United States in an interview with The Star Press last year.

"They like the macho status they can get from having a tough dog, but don't necessarily know anything about bloodlines," said Goodwin said.

The number of street fighters are on the rise, Goodwin said, in part because of growing influences from the outlaw world of rap music.

Rapper Jay Z last year included brief images of fighting pit bulls on his popular music video for 99 Problems.

In 2002, rapper DMX pleaded guilty to animal cruelty for having 13 neglected pit bulls in his possession. He admitted that he named an album Grand Champion in homage to top-notch fighting dogs.

Some cities have passed "breed-specific" legislation that bans or restricts ownership of pit bulls and other dogs with aggressive reputations in efforts to cut down on fighting and dog bites.

Dolon said such laws don't work.

"These dogs are great dogs. A lot of them are just ending up in the wrong hands," she said.

In February 2005, a dead pit bull was discovered in a trash can behind an abandoned South Madison Street Chinese restaurant.

Two months later, police arrested Tyson Carpenter and Joseph Lee Keating for staging a dog fight at Keating's West Ninth Street home.

Carpenter and Keating became the first men convicted of dogfighting on a felony level in Delaware County.

* Contact news reporter Nick Werner at 213-5832.

Reward

* The Unconditional Love Foundation is offering a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone involved in the fighting of a pit bull found dead in a northside Dumpster on Tuesday.

* People can e-mail their tips to stopdogfighting@aol.com or call the foundation at (765) 287-9043.

* Police believe they are looking for a man who drives a black Oldsmobile Alero with chrome rims.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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