

Items to Include in a Search Warrant for a Dogfighting Operation

The basic search warrant for a potential dogfighting raid should include the following items:

- A. All American pit bull terriers, American bulldogs, fighting dogs, guard dogs;
- B. All dogfighting paraphernalia, including: treadmills, cat-mills, exercise wheels, hides or other material used as hanging devices to strengthen or condition dogs; collars, leashes, chains, and other devices used to exercise or restrain fighting dogs; wooden sticks or handles used to pry open dogs' jaws; weight scales; any washtubs, buckets, pails, and sponges used to wash dogs; any books, magazines, photographs, film, videotapes, or writings that may contain material that depicts or promote dogfighting or training or conditioning of dogs for dogfighting; any awards, trophies, plaques, or ribbons promoting or relating to dogfighting;
- C. Any still cameras or movie, video cameras or camera phones, film, video or audio recordings, memory cards or other storage devices used to record dogfighting activity;
- D. All portable carrying cases and pens; antibiotics, drugs, or vitamins used to treat injured dogs or to enhance their performance; needles and syringes used for the administration of such drugs; suture or surgical staple kits and other veterinary supplies;
- E. Weapons, handguns, shotguns, or rifles used to protect the premises upon which illegal dogfighting occurs;
- F. Registration papers or other materials showing written materials showing ownership of pit bull dogs or other fighting dogs, including bills of sale, pedigrees, breeding records, and veterinary records; any dogfighting records, including name and telephone number lists of persons suspected of being dogfighters; any rules, contracts, training logs, breeding records or other written agreements concerning the fighting of dogs;
- G. Any constructed enclosures or components of any pits or arenas used for the purpose of dogfighting or training dogs for fighting; any carpeting or other materials used on the floor of such pits

Additional items to include

Veterinary Forensic Evidence

The increasing use of veterinary forensic evidence in the investigation and prosecution of dogfighting has expanded the range of evidence that should be collected from such scenes. Additional items to be seized should include:

- A. Any pit bull terrier/ fighting dog or other animal carcasses which are buried on the property;

B. Any flooring or wall components displaying evidence of dog blood, fur or other animal matter;

C. Any utensils or weapons utilized in the killing of animals, to include ropes, wire, guns, rifles, spent shotgun shells, spent bullet cartridges, buckets, shovels, baseball bats, metal pipes;

D. Deposits of blood, fur or other animal matter located on the property;

E. Material (e.g. from buccal (cheek) swabs) for DNA determination from all live dogs for purposes of comparison with other blood/tissue evidence;

F. Any and all materials reflecting the destruction of evidence at that location, including destroyed, damaged or tampered with flooring, wall components or other structures;

G. Soil, blood, fur, vegetation, insects and similar samples from the property to be used for forensic testing

Computer Materials

The description of electronic hardware to be seized should be as comprehensive as possible. Computer hardware consists of all equipment that can receive, capture, collect, analyze, create, display, convert, store, conceal or transmit electronic, magnetic or similar data. It includes, but is not limited to, any central processing unit, laptop, notebook; game consoles or devices with Internet connectivity, internal and peripheral storage devices (fixed disks, external hard disks, floppy disk drives and diskettes, tape drives and tapes, optical storage devices, flash drives, digital memory cards, Universal Serial Bus (USB) devices, Firewire devices, peripheral input/output devices (keyboards, printers, scanners, plotters, video display monitors) as well as any devices, mechanisms or parts that can be used to restrict access to computer hardware (such as physical locks and keys, biometric security devices).

The warrant should specify that these devices be searched for any photographs or videos depicting dogfighting activity, acts of animal cruelty or the training of dogs for the purpose of fighting as well as files documenting ownership of pit bull dogs or other fighting dogs, including bills of sale, pedigrees, breeding records, and veterinary records; any dogfighting records, including name and telephone number lists of persons suspected of being dogfighters; any rules, correspondence, contracts, training logs, breeding records or other written agreements concerning the fighting of dogs;

Cell phones

It can be argued that cell phones may contain evidence of the crime in that they are likely to contain photos or videos taken of the current or previous fights. In addition, they may be an instrumentality of the crime since they were likely used to coordinate travel to a secret location may contain a record of calls and/or text messages directing the owner of the phone to the fight location or other contacts directly related to participation in the fight activity.