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Review Article

DOG FIGHTING IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Aim of this paper is to revise dog fighting in Turkey. Obviously dog fighting is a type of blood sport and almost occurs in every part of the country and in every type of community. When a fight begins, generally the spectator place bets with one another on which dog will win. Dog fighting also includes some strict rules for fights. Dog fighting is highly common in Turkey even though it is illegal and prohibited by the Law of Animal Protection. Dog fighting events are organized in cold seasons. This season starts around September and ends in late April. Dog fighting events are made on ground in a quiet place. Spectators never bet on dogs for money, but they just watch the game. Owners of dogs put their dogs in fighting field either for fame or money. Sometimes the owners bet even a car or a house for the game. A group of people organize pitbull fighting in Istanbul in pits in closed areas but their number is negligible. The dogfighters of Turkey are commonly ill-educated and income people. The most notorious fighting dogs are Turkish Kangal (Karabash) Shepherd Dog crossbreds. As a result the dog fighting is a criminal activity and requires police intervention.

Key words: Canis familiaris, Pit Bull, blood sport, illegal sports, animal fight.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic livestock animals serve humanity by giving plenty of products including meat, milk, egg, honey, floss silk, wool, fur, skin, feather, intestine, work, amusement etc (Ertugrul et al., 1993). Moreover some animals have been and continue to be used for fighting by some mentally abnormal people. In various regions of the world there are popular animal fighting events including fighting of bull, camel, cock, cricket, dog, horse, partridge and ram (Anon, 2014a). For centuries usually dog fighting has been principally enjoyed by men. Unfortunately, the popularity of this activity has increased. There was little initial interference from the law, since it was possible to fight two dogs in any hollow or shed without attracting much attention, for dogs fight with relatively little noise. They can easily be removed after the fight, carried away in sacks if their condition was likely to draw suspicion (Drable, 2014). For example in USA dog attacks and bites are not so common (Hussain, 2005). Although more than 20 fatalities happened each year in USA because of dog biting, there was no report that a man died during dog fight, but the dog. Maybe the 20 fatalities because of dog biting seem as tragic but at least 8.000 humans were killed by other human each year which was 200 times more than dog biting deaths (Lockwood, 1995).

2. THE DOGS

Many dog breeds have been bred specifically for the strength, attitude, and physical features that would make them better fighting dogs. Some traits are common among most of fighting breeds that

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it's outward appearance, a large, stocky, heavy breed with a powerful build and strongly developed head, and threatening voice (Massey, 2012). Drable (2014) reported from Vesey-Fitzgerald that early fighting dogs were of all sorts of shapes, sizes and colors since their breeding was very promiscuous. In 1860s they were two groups, from one of which the English Bull Terrier was developed and from the other the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. The both breeds were initially very game, since nobody would keep a bull terrier which was not, but men soon bred the English variety for show, and looks were "improved" at the expense of courage. The Staffordshire bull terrier continued to be bred for the pit and, though not very standardized even yet there is no living breed so game (Drable, 2014).

In USA about 30 percent of all dogs in animal shelters are pit bulls, the breed used for dogfighting. In some areas this figure can climb to 60 percent (Villavicencio, 2007). For professional and hobbyist dogfighters, the sale of pups from parents who have won several fights is a major part of their activity. Underground dog fighting publications and websites are commonly used to advertise pups or the availability of breeding stock. Many "street" fighters think they can also make money by breeding and selling dogs, but a great number of these animals are killed or abandoned if they fail to perform (Anon, 2014b).

Generally all kinds of dogfighters crop the ears and dock the tails of fighting dogs. There are two main reasons. First it limits the areas of the body that another dog can grab onto in a fight. Secondly it makes it more difficult for other dogs to read the animal's mood and intentions through the normal body language cues dogs use in aggressive encounters. Fighters usually perform this cropping or docking operation themselves using crude and inhumane techniques (Anon, 2014b).

Table 1. Some breeds which are used for dogfighting (Anon, 2014e).

Breed	Origin	Breed
Aryan Molossus	Afghanistan	Gull Terrier
Kuchi	Afghanistan	Dogue de Bordeaux
Dogo Argentino	Argentina	Caucasian Ovtcharka
Armenian Gampr	Armenia	Central Asian Ovtcharka
Shar Pei	China	Alano Español
Tibetan Mastiff	China	Perro de Presa Canario
Georgian Shepherd	Georgia	Perro de Presa Mallorquin
Guatemalan Dogo	Guatemala	Kangal Dog
Glen of Imaal Terrier	Ireland	Bull Terrier
Lottatore Brindisino	Italy	English Mastiff
Neapolitan Mastiff	Italy	Staffordshire Bull Terrier
Akita Inu	Japan	American Pit Bull Terrier
Tosa	Japan	American Staffordshire Terrier
Korean Jindo	Korea	American Bulldog
New Guinea Singing	Papua New Guinea	Boston Terrier
Bully Kutta	Pakistan	

Early dogs of the bull terrier type were bred for the working characteristic known as gameness, with the pitting of dogs against bear or bull testing this attribute along with the strength and skill of the dog. These early "proto-staffords" provided the ancestral foundation stock for the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, the Bull Terrier, the American Pit Bull Terrier and American Staffordshire Terrier. This common ancestor was known as the "Bull and Terrier" (Anon, 2014c). Generally the breeds of Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, and Bull Terriers are called as pit bulls (Massey, 2012). In other countries breeds of Bully Kutta, Caucasian Ovtcharka, Central Asian Ovtcharka, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro, the Presa Canario, the Tosa Inu, and Turkish Kangal (Karabash) Shepherd are used for fighting (Gibson, 2005; Ensminger, 2010;

Anon, 2014b; Gasimzadeh, 2014; Anon, 2015d). Also some breeds are accepted as extinct such as Blue Paul Terrier, Bull and Terrier, Cordoba Fighting Dog, Dogo Cubano, English White Terrier, Molossus, Old English Bulldog dogs (Table 1) (Anon, 2014b).

It is often asked whether the Pit Bull is unsuitable as a family pet or not? In the early 1900s pit bulls were considered the epitome of the all American dog. For example Stubby, the first war hero dog and Pete the Pup, from "The Little Rascals" were very good examples of this breed (Hussain, 2005). Although bred for fighting other dogs the American Pit Bull terrier has long been a popular family pet, noted for his strength, intelligence and devotion. It is clearly understandable that any dog can behave aggressively, depending on the context, his genetic background, and his upbringing and environment. If a dog is treated well, properly trained and thoroughly socialized during puppyhood and matched with the right kind of owner and household, it is likely to develop into a well-behaved companion and cherished member of the family. However, some Pit Bulls and Pit Bull crossbreeds may be more inclined to develop aggression toward other dogs (Anon, 2014b).

American Pit Bull Terrier is a wonderful dog breed, but it comes with risks. Being large-jawed, it is more capable than many breeds of doing damage with its bites. As with any dog, pit bulls can be trained, and often are as calm as dogs can be, but people assume they are vicious because they have become popular with gangs and other unpopular members of American society (Ensminger, 2012).

Even though German Shepherd Dog (GSD) does not seem a fighting dog breed, they are actually a biteable dog breed. Lockwood reported from a study realized by Berzon that GSDs made up 45% of the dogs listed in Baltimore bite reports. Lockwood also reported from a study realized by Moore about percentage of the registered population of various breeds that were involved in bites. The highest rankings in that research were pit bulls (12.3%), chow chows (11.4%), GSD (6.5%), Dobermans (4.3%) and Rotweilers (4.1%) (Lockwood, 1995). A study claimed that the annual incidence of dog bites was 0.5 percent 1000 children between 0 and 16 years of age. The relative risk for a dog attack by a German shepherd or a Doberman was 5 times higher than that of a Labrador Retriever or cross-breed (Schalamon et al., 2005).

3. DOG FIGHTING IN TURKEY

A website reported that local gendarme forces caught red-handed two citizens under the Law of Animal Protection in Karaatli village of Yesilova county of Burdur Province. The men were amerced for fighting Turkish Kangal (Karabash) Shepherd Dogs for 5.111 TL (about 2.500 USD) for each person (Anon, 2014f).

Dog fighting is highly common in Turkey even though it is illegal and prohibited by the Law of Animal Protection. There are mainly two types of dog fighters, amateurs and professionals. The amateurs are generally consisting of teens. They fight their dogs spontaneously to show their masculinity. If a dog of an amateur loses the fight, they generally do not kill the dog. They hope that the defeat happens accidentally and his dog wins text time. The professionals are the most dangerous group. Most of the professionals have dog breeding farm or raise one or several dogs. Outcome of dog fighting for those people is to sell more expensive pups which are litter of the winner dog. On the other hand owner of the winner dog sells any puppy just cheating people that they are litter of the champion dog (pers. obs.).

Dog fighting are organized in cold seasons. This season starts around September and ends in late April. First the champion of province is decided in related each province. The Championship of Turkey is organized in late April in province of Aksaray. In Thrace which European part of Turkey there does not organized professional dog fighting events. Maybe some amateurs fight dogs. The generally dog fighting is focused on Central Anatolia which is Asian part of Turkey. Also provinces of Afyon, Ankara, Eskisehir, Istanbul, Izmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kars, Nevşehir, Sivas, Yozgat are some dog fighting centers (pers. obs.).

Dog fighting events are made on ground in a quiet place. Spectators never bet on dogs for money,

but they just watch the game. Owners of dogs put their dogs in fighting field either for fame or money. Sometimes the owners bet even car or house for the game. A group of people organize pitbull fighting in Istanbul in pits in closed areas but their number is negligible (pers. obs.).

The dogfighters of Turkey are not similar the dogfighters of USA. For example they are generally not criminal people. They are commonly low educated and income people. The most common breed used for dog fighting is Turkish Kangal (Karabash) Shepherd Dog (TKSD) or its crossbreds. Normally TKSD is not a fighting dog, but its brave and daredevil character put them in dog fighting events (pers. obs.). Because of this situation some countries put this dog into category of banned breeds (Anon, 2014g). The most notorious fighting dogs are TKSD crossbreds (pers. obs.).

4. CONCLUSION

It is too difficult to understand that some people defend dog fighting. According to those abnormal people dog fights are necessary and should be carried out (Gasimzadeh 2014). This kind of people is rare in community but they are always present in the community and always will be. The most important thing to prevent dog fighting is inform related police or gendarme forces. Also penalties should be more increased.

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