



PRESS NOTICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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21 INDICTED IN SEPARATE COCKFIGHTING ORGANIZATIONS

Fights Staged in Lexington, Williamsburg Counties

Columbia, South Carolina — United States Attorney W. Walter Wilkins announced today that 21 people were charged in three separate indictments for their involvement in two cockfighting ventures operated in Lexington County and Williamsburg County, South Carolina. The Indictments are the result of a 13-month undercover investigation by state and federal authorities, during which undercover officers attended eight cockfighting derbies held near Swansea in Lexington County and near Oceida in Williamsburg County.

The indictments allege that the defendants operated an unlawful animal fighting venture and an illegal gambling business, and that they conspired to violate the Animal

Welfare Act by staging or participating in cockfighting contests.

Charged in one indictment for alleged criminal conduct in Lexington County were Nancy Elizabeth Dial, age 52, of North, and Sheri M. Hutto, age 48, and Wayne Hugh Hutto, age 60, both of Pelion.

A second indictment, also for alleged activity in Lexington County, was issued against Michael Monroe Grooms, age 54, of Gilbert; Michael T. Rodgers, age 57, of Kingstree; Leslie Wayne Peeler, age 41, of Gaffney; Jeffrey Brian Gibert, age 38, of Ninety Six; Gerald Benfield, age 57, of York; Johnny Junior Harrison, age 35, of Aiken; John Carlton Thurman Hoover, age 39, of Pelion; Coy Dale Robinson, age 31, of Blackstock; Scott Edward Lawson, age 41, of Laurens; Jimmie Jesse Hicks, age 23, of Swansea; and George William Kelly, age 44, of Kershaw.

A third Indictment alleging cockfighting in Williamsburg County Charged Roy Wilson Braddock, age 51, and Mary Durden Braddock, age 55, both of Hollywood; Jonathan Leviner, age 38, of Sumter; David Earl Davis, age 45, and Buster Dale Moore, age 61, both of Andrews; Wade Timmons Mcgee, age 34, of Scranton; and Charles E. Allbritton, age 66, of Mt. Pleasant.

The maximum penalty for conspiracy, operating an unlawful animal fighting venture, and operating an illegal gambling business is five years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.00 on each charge.

The cases were investigated by Officers of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the United States Department of Agriculture, Office of

Inspector General, and the Internal Revenue Service. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan S. Williams of the Columbia office is prosecuting the cases. The South Carolina Attorney General's Office is assisting in the investigation and prosecution.

The United States Attorney stated that all charges in these Indictments are merely accusations and that all defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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