

PRESS RELEASE

Oklahoma Man Charged with Operating Large-Scale Dog Fighting and Trafficking Venture

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190 Dogs Seized, Most Ever Seized from a Single Person in a Dog Fighting Case

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma unsealed a grand jury indictment recently charging an Oklahoma man with violations of the dog fighting prohibitions of the federal Animal Welfare Act.

Leshon Eugene Johnson, of Broken Arrow, made his initial appearance in court last week. He is charged with possessing 190 pit bull-type dogs for use in an animal fighting venture and for selling, transporting, and delivering a dog for use in an animal fighting venture. Federal authorities seized the 190 dogs from Johnson in October 2024 as authorized under the Animal Welfare Act. This is believed to be the largest number of dogs ever seized from a single person in a federal dog fighting case.

"Animal abuse is cruel, depraved, and deserves severe punishment," said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. "The Department of Justice will prosecute this case to the fullest extent of the law and will remain committed to protecting innocent animals from those who would do them harm."

"The FBI will not tolerate criminals that harm innocent animals for their twisted form of entertainment," said FBI Director Kash Patel. "The FBI views animal cruelty investigations as a precursor to larger, organized crime efforts, similar to trafficking and homicides. This is yet another push in the FBI's crackdown of violent offenders harming our most innocent."

"Dog fighting is illegal, and courts have upheld its prosecution time and again," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Adam Gustafson of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD). "This strategic prosecution of an alleged repeat offender led to the seizure of 190 dogs destined for a cruel end. It disrupts a major source of dogs used in other dog fighting ventures."

"Dog fighting is a cruel, blood-thirsty venture, not a legitimate business or sporting activity," said U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Wilson for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. "I applaud the investigative work of the FBI and the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division in detecting and dismantling breeding operations which only serve to propagate this deplorable conduct."

According to court documents, Johnson ran a dog fighting operation known as "Mal Kant Kennels" in both Broken Arrow and Haskell, Oklahoma. He previously ran "KrazySide Kennels" also out of Oklahoma, which led to his guilty plea on state animal fighting charges in 2004. Johnson selectively bred "champion" and "grand champion" fighting dogs — dogs that have respectively won three or five fights — to produce offspring with fighting traits and abilities desired by him and others for use in dog fights. Johnson marketed and sold stud rights and offspring from winning fighting dogs to other dog fighters looking to incorporate the Mal Kant Kennels "bloodline" into their own dog fighting operations. His trafficking of fighting dogs to other dog fighters across the country contributed to the growth of the dog fighting industry and allowed Johnson to profit financially.

Under federal law, it is illegal to fight dogs in a venture that effects interstate commerce and to possess, train, transport, deliver, sell, purchase, or receive dogs for fighting purposes.

If convicted, Johnson faces a maximum penalty on each count of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The FBI's Shreveport Resident Agency office is investigating the case.

Trial Attorney Sarah Brown and Senior Trial Attorney Ethan Eddy of ENRD's Environmental Crimes Section are prosecuting the case, with assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorney Jordan Howanitz for the Eastern District of Oklahoma.

An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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