



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release
November 20, 2009

Contact: Mark Plowden
803-734-3670
mplowden@ag.state.sc.us

36 Defendants Charged In Cockfighting Stings

Columbia, S.C. – Attorney General Henry McMaster today announced warrants have been issued for thirty-six (36) individuals charged for their involvement in two (2) cockfighting operations in Lexington and Williamsburg Counties. The action is the result of a thirteen (13) month undercover investigation in which S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officers attended cockfighting events near Swansea in Lexington County and near Oceida in Williamsburg County.

Cockfighting is a misdemeanor violation of §16-17-650(A)(1) of the South Carolina Code of Laws, and is punishable to one (1) year imprisonment or a \$1,000 fine.

In 2005, McMaster led an effort to increase the state's maximum penalty for cockfighting from thirty (30) days to one (1) year imprisonment for a first offense. A second or subsequent offense now carries a maximum penalty of three (3) years imprisonment.

“Cockfighting is a crime that leaves an ugly scar on our community,” said McMaster. “The criminal underworld surrounding it is a haven for drugs, violence, and gambling. This sting would not have been possible without the dedicated officers of DNR who led and executed this operation.”

View Lexington County warrants:

http://www.scag.gov/newsroom/pdf/2009/cockfighting_warrants_lexington.pdf

View Williamsburg County warrants:

http://www.scag.gov/newsroom/pdf/2009/cockfighting_warrants_williamsburg.pdf

All offenses will be prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

McMaster stressed that all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until they are proven guilty in a court of law.

###