

Maryland Unveils Dogfighting Reward Program

Tipsters are encouraged to call law enforcement; reward doubles to \$5,000.

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In a new effort to help boost reports of dogfighting in Maryland, officials have teamed up to launch a reward program that doubles the money offered for information leading to arrests and convictions, from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

The animal fighting reward program, unveiled on the first anniversary of NFL quarterback Michael Vick's federal indictment on dogfighting charges, results from a partnership between Maryland Attorney General Douglas Gansler, the Humane Society of the United States, and local law enforcement officials.

"Animal fighting is a cruel and vicious crime that often has direct ties to other illegal activity like drugs and gangs," Gansler said in a statement. An increase in reports of dogfighting is expected to decrease the number of animals harmed or killed by this inhumane activity, he added.

Cockfighting and dogfighting are felonies in Maryland, punishable by up to three years of imprisonment and a maximum \$5,000 fine. Law enforcement experts agree that people who engage in such acts are likely to exert violence against people.

A Chicago Police Department study showed that 65 percent of people charged with animal abuse crimes – including dogfighting – were also charged with violent crimes against people.

The reward program money comes from the Holland M. Ware Charitable Foundation, based in Hogansville, Ga. The confidentiality of informants will be protected.