

Animal Welfare Agencies Participate in Police Raid

A total of 45 dogs was seized in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Posted: April 27, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

A team of animal welfare agencies led by the Louisiana SPCA participated in a major planned raid of a drug-trafficking organization by federal authorities earlier this week.

The agencies were on hand to manage the dogfighting elements of the case. The raid took place simultaneously in Pass Christian, Miss., and St. Bernard Parish, La., and resulted in 45 dogs – 44 American Pit Bull Terriers and one Chihuahua – being seized.

The team included staff from the ASPCA, the LA/SPCA, the St. Charles Parish Humane Society/Animal Control and the Humane Society of South Mississippi. More than a dozen people were taken into custody during the raids.

“I must commend the entire team as to the way they handled this case,” said ASPCA forensic veterinarian Melinda Merck, who was part of the team of animal welfare professionals involved.

“It was energizing to be in the company of such complete professionals, whose extensive experience clearly was an asset in handling a case of such massive proportions,” she said.

Merck is currently documenting the medical condition of all the animals seized, and is expected to spend several days with the team preparing evidence.

“This is one of the most complete examples of a dogfighting operation that I’ve ever seen. Not only are many of the dogs scarred or wounded, the sites were loaded with dogfighting paraphernalia, such as weighing scales, treadmills, chains and weights, dogfighting journals. You name it, it was there,” Merck said.

The investigators also found several burned sites on the property in Mississippi, one of which contained bones from multiple dogs. They also exhumed one dead dog from another grave site, whose remains will be examined.

In examining the live dogs, Merck said, there have been clear signs that they were being kept in extremely neglectful conditions: the Pit Bulls are all thin and very little dog food was found on the premises.