

**HENDERSON COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING SUMMARY  
July 12, 2023**

**Advisory Committee Members Present:**

Jack Walsh  
Penny Sams  
Teri Bentcover  
James Lyon, Vice Chair  
Angela Prodrick  
John Lynn, Chair  
Vince Griggs

**Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

Lauren Hathaway  
Caroline Gunther

**Staff Present:**

Brad Rayfield, Animal Services Center Director

**Meeting called to order:** Chairman Lynn called meeting to order.

**Informal Public Comment:**

**Suzanne Morton-**

Mrs. Morton asked the Animal Services Advisory Committee (ASAC) to consider an ordinance to regulate tethering in Chapter 16 of Henderson County's animal ordinance. She would like the ordinance to prevent any animal from being tethered as a regular prolonged means of being maintained. Her concern has been raised because a dog in her community, from her observations, is tethered all the time. Animal Enforcement (AE) has investigated the dog's welfare on many occasions. Existing state and local laws don't prohibit prolonged tethering, therefore there is nothing AE can do to address her concern regarding tethering.

Sgt. Griggs stated that they have been to the location several times to do health and welfare checks. He said that he will make it a point to go out and check the situation again.

**Laura St. Clair-**

Mrs. St. Clair is the owner of a historic farm in Henderson County (HC). She purchased the farm in 2015 and realized that there is a problem nationally, in the state and in HC regarding cock fighting and fowl purposely breed for cock fighting. Because it's very intimidating to report or speak out about cock fighting it often goes undocumented and unnoticed. It has changed her family's life, finances, and her ability to use her property. She moved her horses to the farm but then moved them out of state for their health and safety.

She told the committee about task forces established throughout the country, NC and quite a few in HC. In addition, NC has been identified as one of the top five states for shipping these purpose breed fighting birds throughout the world. HC is among the areas in NC that have significantly large breeding operations.

Illegal gambling, tax evasion, and more serious crimes often accompany cock fighting. These activities put law enforcement (LE) professionals at risk. People participating are often armed, sometimes drugs are involved, and the roosters themselves pose danger to our LE professionals. There have been many incidents when LE professionals have been injured and sometimes killed trying to shut down these operations.

Regulating is a problem because roosters are considered farm animals. Legitimate agricultural businesses don't need the number of roosters that are present on properties where purpose breed fighting roosters are housed.

She and many others whose property is impacted are in several disease prevention programs. Mrs. St. Clair participates in the National Poultry Improvement Program. The presence of these organizations underlines the concern for the future health of animals on legitimate farms.

Oftentimes animals being transported across state lines are required to have a certificate of health from a licensed veterinarian. Many operators involved in cock fighting don't adhere to these requirements. They also are vaccinating these animals with unauthorized vaccines that commercial poultry operators are not authorized to use. Misuse of these vaccines sometimes puts legitimate livestock industries at risk.

NC is a huge poultry state and she has been working on these issues for almost eight years. She realizes that it will take a multiprong approach to fix these issues. Changes in State Law are necessary but a lot of the focus is on LE and their ability to recognize it and seeing it for what it actually is and to do something about it. She thinks this starts at the local level as well. She submitted some recent news articles for the ASAC to review. She offered to answer any questions committee members may have and asked that these issues be taken very seriously. She also explained she has received request for help from several people in HC. She encouraged the committee to look at general statutes that address indications of fighting and to consider a public awareness campaign.

Chairman Lynn thanked her for coming and acknowledge that public awareness is important to make a difference. Vice Chairman Lyon asked if her neighbor's poultry have been on her property. She said there have been incidents when the neighbor's birds have come on her farm. She explained that she participates in the National Poultry Improvement Program that's administered by NCDA&CS. As a participant she is required to report such incidents to maintain her certification, so they are documented. This requirement is in place because the security and health of her animals are put at risk when "at large" animals come onto her property.

**January 12, 2023 Meeting Summary:** Meeting notes were approved as written.

## Discussion

### Poultry:

Chairman Lynn said that the issues Mrs. St. Clair discussed are addressed in Chapter 16. Sgt. Griggs told the committee the livestock section had been removed about one year ago, therefore any enforcement pertaining to livestock reverts to N.C.G.S.. He explained that it was removed because the State now has a law limiting a county's ability to create ordinances that can result in criminal convictions. Angela Prodrick said definitions would have to be changed in Chapter 16. Chairman Lynn asked Sgt. Griggs what changes would be necessary to address the problems with poultry. Sgt. Griggs suggested that the county attorney would be the best resource to help the committee with that answer. Chairman Lynn asked Sgt. Griggs if he could talk to the county attorney and bring something back at the next meeting for the ASAC to possibly make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. Sgt. Griggs explained that he had talked with Russ Burrel about livestock running at large, and as for the rest of the livestock ordinance they are not considering putting it back in Chapter 16. Vice Chairman Lyon suggested they follow up with a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to change the definition. Sgt. Griggs said there are other things that need to be done before bringing it to the Board of Commissioners. Jack Walsh said staying in line with State Law would best until it changes.

Angela Prodrick asked Sgt. Griggs what experiences he had encountered in his eight years of working on this issue. Also, what he has seen and what steps have AE taken in these situations. Sgt. Griggs could not discuss what had been done on the enforcement end. And trying to figure out what laws/ordinances would help is hard because considerations must be given to landowners and farmers. Chairman Lynn noted that this issue is also about animals running at large and impacting other's property. Vice Chair Lyon pointed out that Mrs. St. Clair is a farmer whose has had her operation disrupted for eight years. Mrs. St. Clair asked if there's still language in Chapter 16 that addresses harboring and indications that animals are being used for fighting. Sgt. Griggs said that the language is still there. Mrs. St. Clair felt that LE could investigate if these animals have the indication(s) of being used for fighting. Jack Walsh pointed out that it takes a considerable number of resources to bust a drug house and similar resources would be needed to successfully bust a fighting operation. He said it is sad but busting one operation just opens the door for another to emerge.

Mrs. St. Clair pointed out that more focus has been placed on cock fighting in the past year. Much of the coverage stems from the implications cock fighting has on food supply. She said there is a shortage of resources for LE, and this is why a multiprong approach is needed to be effective. Among these approaches should be frequent visits to these places from LE to emphasize what they are doing is wrong. Jack Walsh suggested that a case receiving lots of coverage, like that of Michael Vick's, is needed to spawn a higher level of awareness. Vice Chair Lyon said he would like to see LE incorporating frequent visits to these operations that are suspected of being involved. Sgt. Griggs explained that routinely going to someone's

home/property without cause could be grounds for harassment. Jack Walsh talked about the inherent nature that all roosters have for fighting. Mrs. St. Clair said the difference is that animals being raised to fight are being housed in a way that encourages aggression. They are also subjected to changes in diet and given drugs.

Vice Chair Lyon said the discussion should circle back around to what could be done within the ASAC to make changes. Chair Lynn emphasized that the tough part will be to strike a balance between a legitimate farmer and those involved in cock fighting. Until a way to do this found, State Law is what needs to be followed and if changes are made in State Law they can look at making similar changes to Chapter 16. The committee decided to table the discussion until the next meeting and give Sgt. Griggs the opportunity to talk with the county attorney about fowl running at large.

**Chapter 16 Citations (Feeding stray animals):** Committee voted to table this discussion until next meeting.

**Changes to rabies management:**

Brad Rayfield explained that local Health Directors establish confinement requirements for domestic animals that have inflicted skin breaking bites on people. Henderson County Department of Public Health has recently changed requirements related to animals (dogs, cats, and ferrets) entering and coming out of home bite confinements.

Updated Requirements

VACCINATION STATUS AT TIME OF BITE	REQUIREMENT AT DAY 10
Unvaccinated/expired rabies vaccine <b><u>OR</u></b> First-ever dose given <28 days ago	Veterinary statement of health
Up-to-date rabies vaccine <b><u>AND</u></b> First-ever dose given 28+ day ago	Owner self-reports animal health status to 828-694-6010

**Scheduling of Dangerous Dog Hearings through October 12, 2023:** Committee members decided what dates they could participate in Dangerous Dog Hearings through April 13, 2023.

Motion was made to adjourn.