



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Passes Ritchie Bill Banning Dog-Fight Tools

PATTY RITCHIE April 19, 2012

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Will Help Police Crack Down on Growing Cases of Abuse

The state Senate today passed a bill sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie that would make it a crime to possess dog fighting equipment, like “breaking sticks,” “cat mills” or other devices used to train fighting dogs or actual dog fighting events.

The measure, S.6774, is aimed at protecting innocent animals from a growing number of animal fight cases, by giving police and prosecutors new tools to stop dog fighters who, because of the underground nature of their crimes, are hard to catch in the act, and are often connected to drug dealing and other dangerous crimes.

“Dog fighting isn’t sport,” Senator Ritchie said. “It is the cruel and wanton abuse of innocent animals, often connected with other crimes and lawlessness, and we must make every effort to put an end to it.” Dog fighting is illegal in all 50 states—and even spectators can face fines and jail time in New York—but cases are hard to prove unless law enforcers witness the actual event.

Senator Ritchie’s bill, which is a top priority of the Humane Society and ASPCA, would make owning, possessing, selling, transferring or manufacturing animal fighting paraphernalia a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 90 days in jail. Repeat offenses within five years would carry a one year jail term. Animal advocates have noted an uptick in dog fights in recent years, measured by a rising number of animals at local shelters that show signs of fighting, following declines in the 1990s.

The bill defines animal fighting paraphernalia as any “equipment, products, or materials that are used, intended for use, or designed for use in the training, preparation, conditioning or furtherance of animal fighting.”

Examples of such equipment include a “breaking stick,” which is designed to be inserted in a dog’s mouth to break its biting grip on another animal or object; a “cat mill,” a device that allows a cat, rabbit or other small animal to be attached to a rotating arm; or treadmills that are used in dog fight training.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.

Earlier in the week, the Senate passed another bill which would make it a felony to steal a dog or other pet. It’s not uncommon for stolen dogs to end up involved in organized dog fights.