



COUNTY OF YOLO

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 21, 2014 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney

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Dunnigan Man Sentenced for Cockfighting Operation

(Woodland, CA) – February 21, 2014 – Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today Yolo County Superior Court Judge Daniel Maguire sentenced 63-year-old Lorenzo Pena Ponce of Dunnigan to 20 days county jail and three years summary probation for crimes stemming from an “underground” cockfighting ring operated by Ponce. On January 24, 2014, a Yolo County jury found Ponce guilty on all counts for permitting cockfighting on his premises, owning game birds with the intent to fight, and possession of gaffs.

On February 16, 2013 members of the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office responded to a large-scale cockfighting operation taking place on Ponce’s property in Dunnigan. Upon arriving, deputies found approximately seventy people participating in the “blood sport.” After dozens of participants ran away, deputies located a barn containing a fight pit where roosters continued to fight. The Sheriff’s Animal Control Division arrived shortly afterwards to assist. Many of the roosters found on scene were dead or had to be euthanized due to the inhumane treatment. Deputies also found gambling paraphernalia, gaffs, and vitamin B shots. Gaffs are metal spurs or knives which are tied to the legs of the roosters. There were nearly ninety roosters being raised on the premises for cockfighting.

Law enforcement responded to the Ponce property for a similar cockfighting incident in 2005. Ponce was also convicted of cockfighting crimes in that case. In both instances, Yolo County Sheriff’s deputies responded to ongoing cockfights at Ponce’s property where participants ran away when law enforcement arrived. During the trial in this case, the prosecution presented evidence that Ponce owned the property, the roosters, and the fight pit. However, Ponce denied being present at his residence when sheriff’s deputies arrived.

Deputy District Attorney Barry Shapiro, who prosecuted the case, said the jury’s verdict would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office and expertise of Animal Control.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig noted the dangers of cockfighting. “Along with inhumane treatment of the birds, cockfighting often involves illegal wagering of thousands of dollars, firearms and other weapons,” said Reisig. “Cockfighting is not a sport. It’s a crime.”

The District Attorney’s Office is requesting \$106,235.00 from Ponce for costs to the County for impoundment, care, and euthanasia of the birds taken from Ponce’s property. Ponce contested that amount at sentencing, and a restitution hearing is scheduled before Judge Maguire for April 11, 2014.

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