The Fight ...

In Absence of U. S. Ban

After lying low for several months because of publicity surrounding Congressional hearings in 1974, dog fight activity is again increasing in many parts of the United States. Prospects for a federal ban on the so-called "sport" seemed good following hearings by the House Committee on Agriculture in the fall of 1974, but none of the several bills being considered were reported out of committee. Hopes for a federal ban were revived last November when the Senate Commerce Committee conducted hearings on several bills that would extend the authority of the Animal Welfare Act of 1970. HSUS Chief Investigator Frantz Dantzler, in response to the committee's invitation to testify, said HSUS favored separate legislation to establish a dog fighting ban instead of adding it to the 1970 legislation, with enforcement in the hands of the Dept. of Agriculture.

Dog fighting should be labeled "a serious and separate crime, with the prohibition squarely included within the provisions of Title 18 of the U. S. Code," Dantzler told the committee. "This way, the enforcement of the statute outlawing this vicious crime will not be intertwined with the inspections and regulatory duties of the Dept. of Agriculture, but will instead have all the normal force and power of the Dept. of Justice behind it."

The bill introduced by Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), S-193, and several House bills would meet this requirement. HSUS is convinced that dog fighting will be stopped only by a federal ban. The ban that all 50 states have in effect has been totally ineffective in stopping the activity, largely because it has been relegated to the category of a misdemeanor. California recently enacted legislation to overcome this obstacle by giving law enforcement officials the choice of making it either a misdemeanor or a felony.

Organizations working to stop dog fighting should take note of the tactics used by dog fighters in trying to block the California legislation. The dog fighters hired a professional lobbying firm to help them convince legislators that the only bad aspect of the activity is betting. With the aid of animal welfare organizations, this approach failed.

Dantzler, who took over the HSUS Dept. of Field Services and Investigations last November, has issued an appeal to individuals and groups throughout the nation to supply him with information about dog fight activities in their vicinity. "I would like to make HSUS headquarters a clearing house for dog fighting information," he said.

The Spectators ...