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July 18, 2007

## Indictment Against Vick Exposes Grisly Allegations

Michael Vick said weeks ago he had no knowledge of dogfighting on his property and no involvement in the activity. The website for his kennel said he would absolutely not sell dogs for fighting.

What a bunch of claptrap. Vick has, by all reliable accounts, been up to his ears in dogfighting. Now, he is knee-deep in trouble.



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This dog was seized from Michael Vick's property.

The indictment handed down yesterday by a grand jury in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Virginia includes specific information that incriminates Vick and three cohorts in a criminal syndicate spanning several states centered around the barbaric practice of dogfighting (see the court documents).

Among the allegations: Some or

all of the four individuals named in the indictment starved dogs to instill aggression. They "tested" dogs in fights against other dogs. They shot, body-slammed and even hung dogs that did not perform well. They electrocuted a losing dog. They gambled tens of thousands of dollars on staged combat involving these poor creatures.

The legal case against Vick and his co-conspirators set out in the indictment is damning and chilling in its detail—unfathomable, as Sports Illustrated describes. Michael Vick will now face off in court against the United States of America. The HSUS is deeply appreciative of the federal law enforcement authorities—from investigators at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General to the U.S. Attorney—for treating this case with the seriousness that it deserves. Their work has been exemplary to date.

There are two other arenas of activity where the trajectory is not as clear.

First, how will the NFL and its commissioner, Roger Goodell, respond? Goodell made headlines months ago by upgrading the league's code of conduct. Yet, from the start, the NFL has said that while it finds dogfighting degrading and cruel, it must not act until the courts render a judgment. If the NFL is going to mirror the actions of the courts, why have the code of conduct in the first place?

We all know the United States has a judicial system, and that prosecutors and judges may act when evidence is assembled and presented. That's a separate process. If the code of conduct in application means that the NFL will wait until the courts conclude their work, then the internal procedures are just a bunch of words on paper and are cosmetic, not substantive. Other NFL players, like Pacman Jones and Chris Henry, have been suspended while they awaited trial and before they were convicted of anything. Team officials and sports fans will be watching to see if Vick is treated differently.

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### About Wayne

Few are in a position to speak for the animals like Wayne Pacelle. As President and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States, he leads 11 million members and constituents in the mission of celebrating animals and confronting cruelty. [Read more >>](#)

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At the very least, Vick should be suspended indefinitely from the NFL. This case demands action. I hope you'll [contact Commissioner Goodell](#) today and urge him to immediately suspend Vick.

The other set of decision-makers are [Vick's corporate endorsers](#)—~~Nike, Coca-Cola\*~~, ~~Kraft Foods\*~~, Rawlings, ~~Powerade\*~~ and Electronic Arts. They all have contracts with Vick, and now that the indictment has been handed down, they must sever their corporate relationships with him as soon as their contracts allow.

They enlisted Vick, like any company signs on an athlete, because they hope consumers will follow the lead of the star and buy their product. Well, Vick is best-known now for peddling cruelty, and that's not a product they have any business selling to consumers. They need to steer clear of this man. Nike has thus far [recapitulated the NFL's line of argument](#)—let's wait until the courts adjudicate the matter. That's just not sufficient.

Air Tran has already made the wise decision and [dumped Vick](#). And the others, led by Nike, need to do the same. You might take a moment to [write Nike](#) and convey that point.

HSUS dogfighting experts have [been on top of the issue](#), working with federal authorities from the start, and assisting with the care of 52 dogs taken from Vick's property (~~you can help us care for these animals with a special donation [EXPIRED]~~).

We'll not relent. In the end, we hope that the ugly and grisly details that have been exposed will awaken the American public to the scourge of dogfighting and steer young people away from this criminal conduct. Dogfighting is a dead end for any person participating in it, and there's nothing hip or cool about it.

**\*Editor's Note:** *Coca-Cola/Powerade ended its relationship with Michael Vick in 2004 and Kraft Foods ended its relationship in 2005. We regret the error.*

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Posted by Wayne Paccelle on 18 July 2007 at 1:00 PM in [Actions to Help Animals](#) , [Humane Society at Work](#) , [News & Culture](#)

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