

Maryland Gamefowl Report - Update

HSUS Research and Analysis | December 2024

INTRODUCTION

The HSUS has conducted research into gamefowl yards in Maryland to determine their prevalence in the state. Gamefowl yards are tracts of land where hundreds of birds are bred and sold for the purpose of cockfighting. This report summarizes research to document the number of gamefowl yards in Maryland and their location.

Because cockfighting is a criminal industry, there are no official records to document how many gamefowl yards are in Maryland. Consequently, any estimate of the number of gamefowl yards in the state must acknowledge we are able to identify only a portion of them. Nevertheless, this report presents evidence that numerous gamefowl yards exist throughout Maryland.

The following are key highlights:

Of the 23 counties in Maryland, our research found evidence of suspected gamefowl yards in 10 of them: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Harford, Montgomery, Carroll, Somerset, Caroline, Wicomico, Howard and Washington.

MAPS – MARYLAND COUNTIES WITH ARRESTS

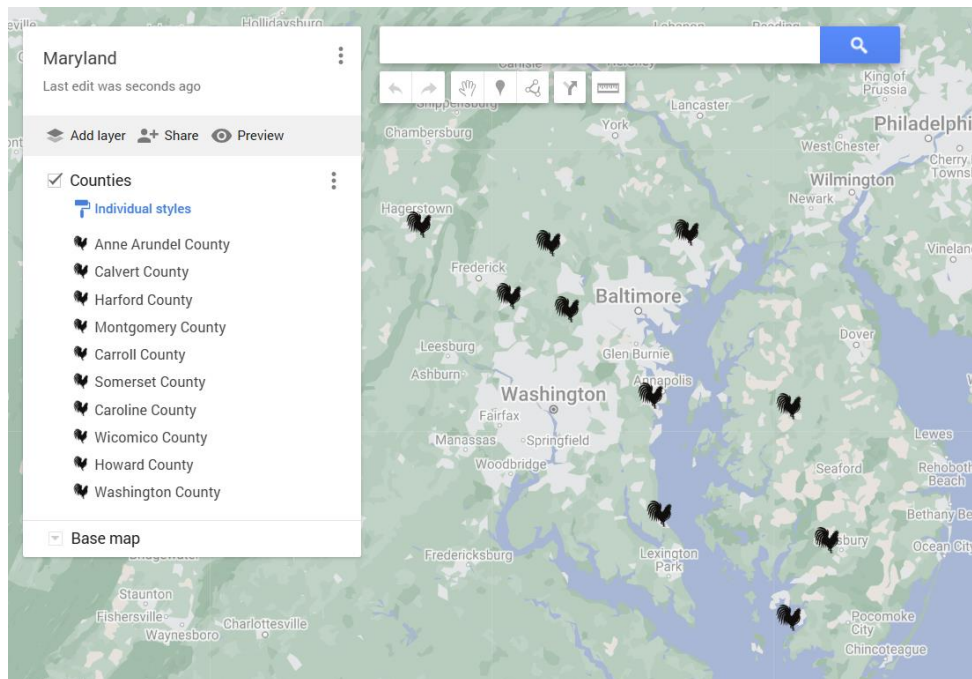
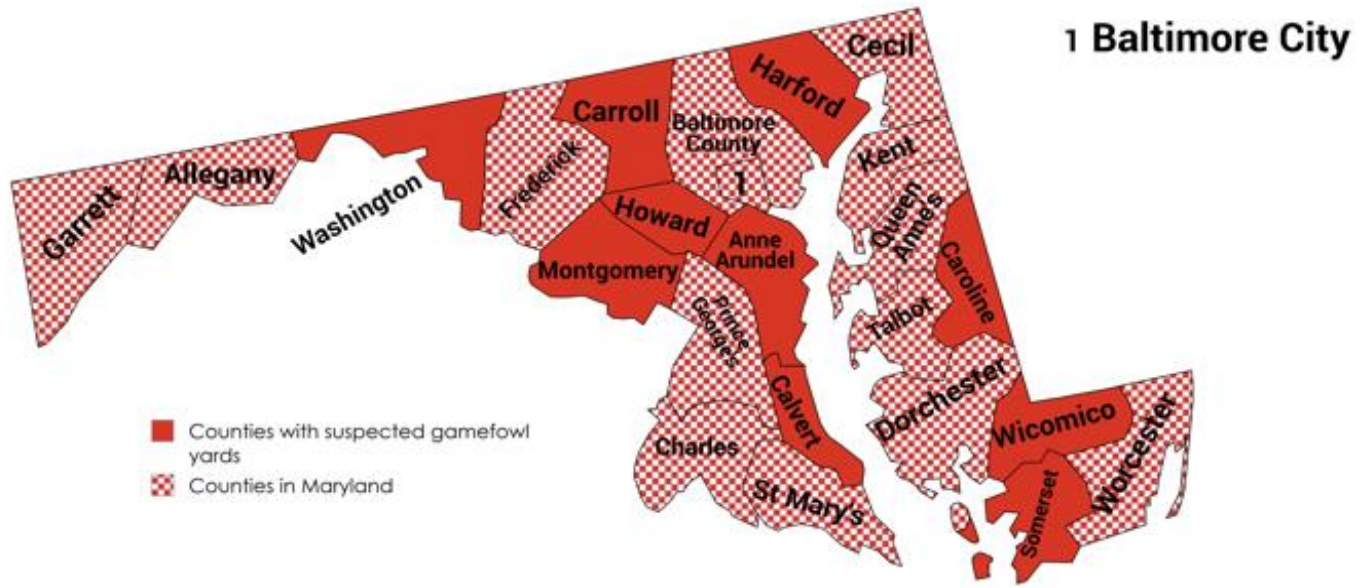


Fig. 1 – Counties with suspected gamefowl yards – Google MyMaps



[Fig. 2 – Counties with suspected gamefowl yards -- mapchart.net](http://mapchart.net)

Two gamefowl yards were identified by satellite imagery and confirmed as the properties where individual arrests occurred. There were also four cockfighting arrests that were found over the past 10 years from four separate counties: Montgomery, Anne Arundel, Harford and Calvert. In addition, nine more suspected gamefowl yards were also found on Facebook, one of which was also confirmed as a seller on Craigslist.

Anne Arundel County

[“Man arrested in cockfighting scheme” \(Video\)](#)

June 9, 2015 | ABC WMAR-2 News



[Fig. 4 - News video from WMAR-2 News](#)

Video Summary Points:

- Arrested man was a tenant on the property.
- Police do not believe cockfighting occurred on the farm, but hundreds of birds were being raised there to be sold for cockfighting.
- Harmon told police he sent some of the birds to the Philippines to fight, according to charging documents.
- The chickens from the Odenton farm tested positive for four highly contagious diseases, including infectious bronchitis.
- The HSUS was on site to assist with the animals.

[“270 Chickens Seized During Cockfighting Investigation Euthanized”](#)

July 15, 2015 / 10:00 AM EDT / CBS Baltimore

Article summary points:

- There were 89 cockfighting-related charges; 67 counts of animal cruelty for cockfighting; and 22 charges for possession of cockfighting paraphernalia (cockfighting implement)
- Maryland Department of Agriculture ordered all 270 of those birds destroyed after testing found all had two serious viruses and bacterial infections.
- According to the article, defendant’s Facebook photos show him posing with some of his winnings from cockfighting, and he advocated for its legalization and advertised fighting roosters for sale. However, the Facebook page could not be located.

[“Odenton man gets 2 years for cockfighting, 6 months for not registering as sex offender”](#)

Article summary points:

- Defendant was on probation for failing to register as a sex offender and received six additional months on top of the two-year sentence for cockfighting crimes.
- He was also ordered to pay \$1,100 to county animal control for restitution.



Police say authorities discovered cockfighting paraphernalia, as well as roosters, hens and chicks living in deplorable conditions.

Fig. 5 – Photo Credit WBALTV

Calvert County

[“Huntingtown man faces animal cruelty/cockfighting charges”](#)

MARTY MADDEN mmadden@somdnews.com Sep 4, 2023

Article summary points:

- The alleged cockfight venue location was not disclosed, and the residence/location of the arrest showed no evidence of a gamefowl yard on the property.
- Arrestee did not own the property where he was residing.
- He was charged with nine counts of animal cruelty/cockfighting and one count of possessing a cockfighting implement (a sparring muff).¹
- Allegedly owned, sold, trained and transported nine roosters “with the intent that the fowl be used in a cockfight.”
- Some of the flock tested positive for laryngotracheitis.²

¹ Sparring Muff: leather covers that resemble boxing gloves. They are placed over the bird’s spurs during practice fights.

² Laryngotracheitis: commonly known as infectious laryngotracheitis virus (ILT), ILTV is an acute, highly contagious herpesvirus infection of chickens, pheasants, peafowl, and, less commonly, turkeys that is characterized by severe dyspnea, coughing, rales, gasping, and expectoration of bloody mucus ([Merck Veterinary Manual](#), 2024)

Harford County

“Baltimore County man convicted of running cockfighting ring in Harford County”

by Tim Swift Thu, May 26th 2022, 6:14 PM EDT

Article summary points:

- Harford County sheriff's deputies said the defendant ran a cockfighting operation from the 36-acre property, which was zoned for agricultural use; no other names were listed.
- He was not the owner of his residence or the property where the arrest took place.
- The defendant was charged with and convicted of aggravated animal cruelty, cockfighting, being a cockfight spectator and abuse and neglect of an animal, running cockfighting ring.
- Historical maps of property only go back to February 2022 and show evidence of gamefowl yard.
- This property went into foreclosure and was auctioned in July 2022.
- He was sentenced to six years in prison.

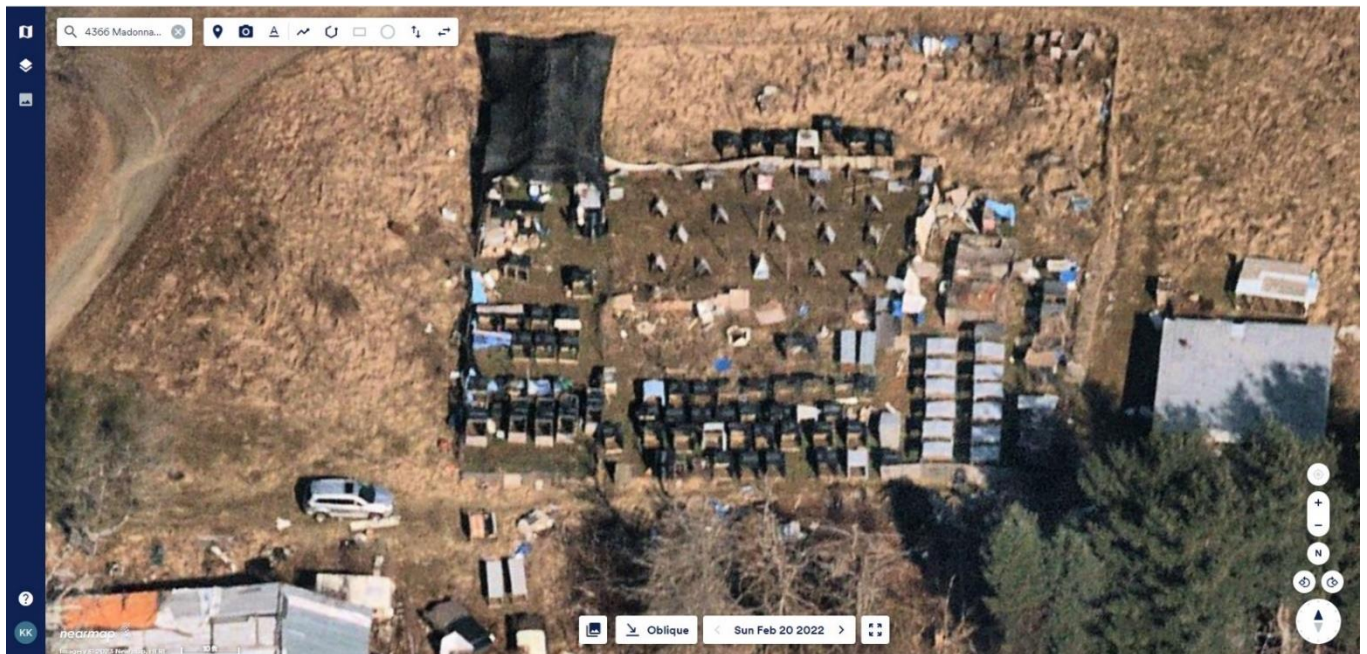


Fig. 7 – Nearmap Satellite Imagery - 4366 Madonna Rd., Street, MD

“Cockfighting in Harford County Exposed, 1 Charged”

A cockfighting operation in Street was dismantled, according to the Harford County Sheriff's Office.

Elizabeth Janney Patch, Staff

Posted Tue, Oct 5, 2021 at 11:42 am ET|Updated Tue, Oct 5, 2021 at 11:55 am ET

Article summary points:

- Detectives seized 209 fowl from the property, as well as “multiple pieces of evidence indicative of a cockfighting operation,” including “keep cages.” The owner denied conducting cockfights.
- About 50 roosters had been “**dubbed**,”³ which he admitted doing.
- The HSUS was on hand to assist with the animals.
- He was sentenced to six years in May 2022, subject to three years of probation and an additional 114-year sentence if probation is violated.
- He also had an out-of-county detainer on him, according to the sheriff's office.
- “It is hard to believe this type of animal cruelty could be occurring in our community, but it serves to illustrate that no place is immune from this type of activity,” Harford County Sheriff Jeffrey Gahler said in a statement on the sheriff's office [Facebook page](#) (below).

Montgomery County

[Alleged Montgomery County cockfighting ring leads to charges for Silver Spring man](#)⁴

Published December 2, 2019

Updated 11:49PM News FOX 5 DC

Article summary points:

- Warrants were served on three separate properties in Burtonsville.
- Violations were found at the address where the arrest took place.
- Man was charged with 22 counts of aggravated cruelty to animals.
- According to the [Statement of Charges](#), more than 100 roosters and hens were removed from the property, and several roosters had their combs and wattles removed.
- Implements associated with cockfighting were found—a gaff⁴ and sparring muffs.⁵

³ Dubbing: to remove the comb and wattle off a fighting cock with scissors, dubbing shears or other cutting tools. This is done to reduce the bird's weight and to reduce chance of injury and bleeding during a fight.

⁴ Gaff: Metal extensions fixed on the spurs of the rooster. They may be pointed or sharpened along the edges depending on the cultural tradition of the cockfighters.

⁵ Sparring Muff: leather covers that resemble boxing gloves. They are placed over the bird's spurs during practice fights.



Fig. 10 – Photo Credit Montgomery County Animal Services

“This Md. County — known for its lawyers, lobbyists and scientists — was also home to a breeding operation for cockfighting, police allege”

Published December 4, 2019
Updated 11:49PM
By Dan Morse News FOX 5 DC

Article summary points:

- Officers found “gauffs” inside a tackle box and other items relating to cockfighting.
- When the farm was searched, officers found an area marked off by barrels that looked like a “training/fighting pit.”

Additional research:

- According to aerial satellite imagery in Fig. 11 below, dated Nov. 5, 2019, two weeks before the arrest, the Burtonsville property showed evidence of a gamefowl yard. While overgrown, the same keep stalls and barrels to the rear are shown in an image capture from October 2023.



Fig. 11 – Nearmap Satellite Imagery