

Sarah Mayer *Public Comment - Animal Wellness Foundation*



# 3

**From:** Jacquelyne Alexander  
**Sent:** Monday, January 8, 2024 7:53 AM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** FW:  
**Attachments:** Third District Supervisor SantaBarbara.pdf

Please include with public comment for the 1/9 BOS meeting. Thank you.



*one*  
**COUNTY**  
*one*  
**FUTURE**

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**From:** Joan Hartmann <[jHartmann@countyofsb.org](mailto:jHartmann@countyofsb.org)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 6, 2024 5:04 PM  
**To:** Jacquelyne Alexander <[jalexander@countyofsb.org](mailto:jalexander@countyofsb.org)>  
**Subject:** Fw:

Please include in public comment for Tuesday.

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**From:** Annie Harvilicz <[drannieawc@gmail.com](mailto:drannieawc@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 6, 2024 12:55 PM  
**To:** Joan Hartmann <[jHartmann@countyofsb.org](mailto:jHartmann@countyofsb.org)>  
**Subject:**

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Please see the attached letter for Supervisor Hartmann.

Thank you!

Happy New Year!

Annie

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Annie Harvilicz, DVM, CVA

Chief Medical Officer

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October 12, 2023

The Honorable Joan Hartmann  
Third District  
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
Santa Barbara, CA

Dear Supervisor Hartmann,

On behalf of the Animal Wellness Foundation, a California-based non-profit with ties to two for-profit hospitals, I write to urge you to help pass a comprehensive county ordinance to limit private ownership of large numbers of roosters on private property. As a licensed California veterinarian, I ask you to adopt a common-sense animal welfare and public-safety proposal and join Los Angeles, Ventura, and other counties across the Southland that have taken similar actions in recent years.

After breeding and training the birds for combat and often stimulating the animals with drugs to enhance endurance and other measures of performance, cockfighters place birds in a pit, equipping the animals with sharp implements on their legs. They prod the birds to fight until one animal has sustained such serious injuries that he cannot continue.

This blood sport is outlawed in California and, in every other state in the country, it is almost often associated with illegal gambling, and often linked to human-on-human violence, narcotics trafficking, and other criminal conduct. By passing this ordinance, Ventura County will send an unmistakable message that you won't tolerate this form of animal cruelty.

As a matter of animal health, we know that these birds are transported widely for fights, throughout California, to other states, and even to other nations. If a bird develops an avian influenza or some other zoonotic disease, the long-distance movement of these highly stressed animals who shed pathogens can deliver the disease to other jurisdictions in rapid fashion.

This scenario has played out time and again in southern California, which has had massive and enormously costly outbreaks of Virulent Newcastle Disease, one of the most important, deadly, and expensive avian diseases. According to the calculations of the national recognized veterinarian who has studied this problem, just three of those outbreaks have cost the United States and the state of California more than \$600 million in real costs – for reimbursement for depopulation and also for on-the-ground containment.

Modern farms take precautions to reduce disease transmission risks. The cockfighting community pays little heed to such microbiological concerns and does not have industry standards or protocols. This means that cockfighting derbies, transport of fighting birds to and from derbies and for sales to other cockfighters, and backyard gamecock farms collectively amount to a free-for-all when it comes to widespread movements of birds. There are no meaningful disease testing standards, no quarantine programs, no containment strategies. This is an organized criminal network, and we should have no expectation that such an illicit enterprise

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would manage avian disease matters with care, and that's precisely why the county has an urgent responsibility to act.

Because every other county south of Santa Barbara has county laws restricting private ownership of large numbers of roosters, this makes Santa Barbara County, along with counties to its east, magnets for fights and breeding operations.

Supervisors in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, with the support of the Animal Wellness Foundation, voted with unanimity to place limits on rooster ownership as a strategy to crack down on cockfighting. The cruelty is too severe, the disease risks too great, and the criminal collateral activity too widespread to allow this underground business to flourish. Your decisive action can help mitigate these threats and strike a blow for animal welfare and proper custodianship of animals.

Underlying our support for this ordinance is the notion that we have responsibilities to all animals. Thank you for considering this issue, and all of us at the Animal Wellness Foundation are happy to answer follow-up questions.

Sincerely,

Annie Harvilicz, D.V.M.  
Marina Del Rey, Calif.  
President