

# Meet Goliath!

## So THAT'S What A Bait Animal Looks Like!

Toward the end of May 2012, Happy Trails received a call from the Greater Akron Humane Society. A very pathetic rooster was found in the city of Akron — *could we take him in by any chance?*

We made room for the poor guy and made arrangements to pick him up. There is no way of knowing for sure what his story is, but often, from our past experience with animal fighting cases, we can piece together what has happened to an animal.

The rooster was big. No, not just big. He was huge! A big tall fellow. He was found with duct tape around his feet and across his spurs. *What does that mean?* It usually means that he was used as “bait”. Bait animals are animals used to train other animals for fighting, and if their sharp nails or spurs are taped up, it's done so that they cannot hurt the other bird or fight back against another animal. They are basically attacked regularly and used time and time again for this horrific practice.

Goliath appears to have been

used as such a bait animal for quite some time. He is missing about 75% of his feathers. He has a great deal of scar tissue over and around his left eye, most likely from past injuries. A good portion of his comb and his waddles have been cut off, another hideous practice common to the world of cockfighting. This is a procedure done without the use of anesthesia or

pain killers. A procedure done at the hands of cruel people using a knife or a razor blade.

*Is Goliath now fearful and mean and dangerous from all he's been through?* Far from it! Goliath seems to have already forgiven the miserable humane beings who did this to him, and he genuinely seems to like people. Crazy, huh? He allows us to hold him and hug him, though we all do this very carefully because we don't want to hurt his tender skin. He doesn't seem to have an aggressive bone in his body.

As he recovers, he will slowly start to grow his feathers back and he should also gain weight. When you pick him up you can feel every bone in his body. Recovery will take some time considering the amount of damage that's been done to this gentle creature.

For now, Goliath is friends with Baloo the duck. They seem to have an understanding and they stay out of each others way. They have a mutual respect for each other, and Goliath has been the perfect gentleman around the duck.

The scars around his eyes and head are painfully visible. The scars in his mind and on his heart are ones that have the potential to leave him angry at the world for the hand that life dealt to him. However, once again, the animals are teaching us life lessons if we choose to listen to Goliath, the teacher. He seems to have chosen to forgive the human population in general for the sins of a group of idiots who caused him a great deal of pain. He is choosing to be kind to us and is making choices every day that makes it easier for us to care for him. Goliath is most likely extremely physically uncomfortable at best. However, he is not taking it out on any of us here at Happy Trails. He seems grateful for his new home, for his new situation, and is welcoming a new lease on life. If only people could learn these impor-



**Goliath will available for adoption to a kind, loving and safe home. For adoption information, call Happy Trails at 330-296-5914.**



tant lessons that Goliath has to teach. They are definitely ours if we choose to open our eyes to his example. I'll bet you never thought that a rooster could be a great role model! So instead of asking you to think outside the box, let's just get rid of the box, and see if we just can't learn something from the animals in our lives!

## COCKFIGHTING FACTS

- ◆ Cockfighting is illegal in all 50 states and a felony offense in 35 states and the District of Columbia. The possession of birds for fighting purposes is prohibited in 34 states and the District of Columbia. (ASPCA)
- ◆ Cockfighting is found in every county in Ohio
- ◆ Cockfighting should be taken seriously not only because of the animal abuse, but because it *always* involves other crimes such as
  - illegal firearms
  - underage drinking
  - illegal drugs
  - illegal gambling
  - acts of violence
- ◆ They (*the roosters*) are also given various legal and illegal drugs such as strychnine, caffeine, amphetamines, and epinephrine to make them more aggressive, increase their endurance and clot the blood that will flow during the fight. (from IDA *In Defense Of Animals*)

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*"To me, it's an animal cruelty issue. It's barbaric and gruesome. It's an illegal and unethical practice,"*  
State Senator Mary Jane Garcia  
of New Mexico.

## COCKFIGHTING: A blood sport for roosters

Although it is illegal in all 50 states, cockfighting is a tradition that dates back several centuries and spans several cultures. Thus it is difficult to stamp out. Like other illegal animal fights, cockfights take place surreptitiously.

### ***What is Cockfighting?***

Cockfighting is an organized fight between two roosters who are placed in a pit to fight each other. The roosters have been trained to severely injure and/or kill one another. These birds, which are raised for the purpose of fighting, are tormented to make them aggressive. They are also given various legal and illegal drugs such as strychnine, caffeine, amphetamines, and epinephrine to make them more aggressive, increase their endurance and clot the blood that will flow during the fight.

The natural spurs of the roosters are sawed off and replaced by razor sharp steel blades or curved implements called gaffs which measure from one to three inches long. During the fight, from which neither rooster can escape, the birds peck and maim one another with their beaks and weapons. The long, sharp gaffs stab deep into the flesh often requiring handlers to physically pull the animals apart. Although they have been bred to fight, the animals often become tired, incapable and suffer severe injuries. The fight only ends when one rooster is dead or is too weak to fight. The loser then gets thrown in the trash, sometimes while still alive. For the winner, there is no guarantee that he will survive his injuries and often ends up with the same fate as the losing bird.

Cockfights are held before an arena of cheering spectators who often wager large sums of money on the outcome of the contest. Children are often present at the fights, leading to concern that they are being desensitized to the suffering of others and they are being encouraged to use violence.

### ***Don't these birds fight naturally?***

Although these birds in a flock will often fight to establish a "pecking order", these battles rarely result in injury. Wild roosters conduct ritual showdowns that, as with wolves and many other animals, substitute for and deflect from actual physical combat. Only birds that have been bred and provoked to fight will inflict the serious injuries seen in cockfighting. Also, unlike birds in the wild, these animals cannot escape. They are placed in an enclosed pit and forced to fight until one quits, is severely injured, or dies.

### ***Isn't cockfighting a cultural tradition?***

While cockfighting may be a tradition in some cultures, not all traditions are good ones that deserve to continue. Cesar Chavez, who condemned the practice of cockfighting, once wrote: "*Kindness and compassion toward all living things is a mark of a civilized society. Conversely, cruelty, whether it is directed against human beings or against animals, is not the exclusive province of any one culture or community of people.*" In a statewide survey conducted in Arizona in 1997, 95% of Hispanic voters said they felt that cockfighting was "cruel and inhumane."

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