



Pennsylvania's Pigeon Shoots

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Pennsylvania is the last state to openly host pigeon shoots, cruel events where shooters aim at dazed pigeons launched randomly from boxes with the goal of downing the birds within a ring for prizes. Similar to animal fighting events in their underground nature, contestants gamble on who can shoot the most animals.

Held at private gun clubs, a look at the parking lots during a shoot reveals a mix of local vehicles and luxury cars from as far away as New York, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C. And just like the participants, the birds are trafficked in from out of state with many coming from illegal bird captures in New York City. In fact, just about the only thing about the shoots that comes from Pennsylvania is the legislature's unwillingness to address this brutality.

“Cheap Skeet”

In 1921, live pigeon shoots were banned in Great Britain, and with the growth of the humane movement in the U.S., they were outlawed in a growing number of states. Today, Pennsylvania is the only state to openly harbor them.

After each round of shots at the birds, participants—sometimes children—take to the field to collect wounded and dead animals. If the suffering pigeon is still alive, the collector will sometimes snap the animal's head off or slam her against the ground before tossing the animal into a barrel full of dead and dying pigeons. Often, wounded birds make it outside the ring to the surrounding area and suffer for days before succumbing to their injuries.

The birds are stockpiled months before the shoots in cramped cages, and the pigeons arrive at the events malnourished, dehydrated and disoriented. As many as 5,000 birds become living targets during a three-day shoot, with 70 percent of the birds wounded rather than killed outright and left to suffer before dying.

What You Can Do

HB 1411 and SB 843 have been introduced to finally address the use of live animals in target shoots. If you live in Pennsylvania, call your legislators and tell them that pigeon shoots are an embarrassment to Pennsylvania and it's time to join the rest of the states in shutting them down.

To find out your state legislators, please visit: humanesociety.org/leglookup. If you're interested in sitting down with your legislators to discuss his or her support for this bill, please contact Heidi Prescott, HSUS senior vice president who works on our pigeon shoot campaign, at hprescott@humanesociety.org or 301 721 6415. We're always interested in feedback from legislators on this issue, so please contact Heidi at any time.