

Dear Commissioner Goodall:

I am deeply disturbed by the indictment of Michael Vick for dogfighting charges. I urge you to treat this issue with the utmost seriousness as the case progresses. In light of the seriousness of the charges, I believe that Mr. Vick should be suspended from the League, effective immediately.

Dogfighting is one of society's most barbaric and inhumane activities. The dogs are mistreated, starved and conditioned for aggression, and then allowed to literally destroy one another in the ring. As we have read in the Vick indictment, poor-performing dogs are tortured, maimed and killed. This illegal and despicable activity has no place in a civilized society.

However, dogfighting has expanded its hold in recent years. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 40,000 people in the United States are involved in professional dogfighting, and fight purses reach as high as \$100,000. As many as 100,000 additional people are involved in "streetfighting," informal dogfighting that often involves young people in gangs.

As the most popular team sport in America, professional football has a responsibility to showcase the highest levels of behavior and sportsmanship. Mr. Vick in particular serves as a role model for tens of millions of young viewers. Since his selection as first pick in the 2001 NFL Draft, he has set the NFL record for most rushing yards in a game by a quarterback and been selected to the Pro Bowl three times. Off the field, his jersey has been among the top five sellers among all players since 2001, and Nike has released four signature shoes in his name. *Sports Illustrated* has identified him as one of the "101 most influential minorities in sports."

On behalf of millions of sports fans and dog lovers, I urge you to treat Mr. Vick's dogfighting indictment with the very serious attention it deserves and suspend him from the League until the resolution of legal proceedings. I look forward to working with you on this issue to ensure that dogfighting and other illegal activities have no place in professional sports.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry