

RODEOS

Cruel and obsolete

Cowboys throwing calves off their feet with ropes around their necks tells children that cruelty to animals is okay; but it isn't.

Background

Rodeos are competitive events in which calves, bullocks, steers and horses are ridden, chased, caught and tied in arenas before a paying audience. Competitions may be timed and scored by judges. The underlying aim is to thrill the crowd, but this means putting animals at risk of physical injury and psychological stress when they cannot possibly consent to participate.

Most events rely on hurting or stressing normally docile animals such as horses and bulls to make them buck. They are reacting to a flank strap around their body and a human rider on their back as they would react to a predator¹. When the rider stops and the flank straps are loosened the bucking stops² but some animals take much longer to calm down. When the animals burn out they are sent to sale yards for slaughter or breeding purposes.

Calf Roping

One of the more brutal events in rodeos is the "rope and tie", where calves (less than 6 months old) are chased by a rider on a horse and lassoed around the neck whilst running away. The method of capture means the calf comes to an abrupt stop, often being yanked in mid-air. The human rider then dismounts their horse, picks up the calf, throws him to the ground on his side, then ties three of the calf's legs together whilst the fourth leg is held taut by the rope attached to the saddle.

A Queensland study published in 2016 found that calves previously in rodeos experienced higher stress responses during a simulated "rope and tie" event³. The stress response hormone cortisol, epinephrine (related to psychological stress) and norepinephrine (related to physical stress) had increased

significantly. All calves displayed eye roll, which indicates they are overwhelmed by stress. It is obvious that "rope and tie" events are, by their very nature, barbaric and unacceptable.

Lack of regulation

In Queensland the use of animals is governed by the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (the Act). The purpose of the Act is to promote the care and use of animals in a manner that is socially acceptable. It prohibits bullfighting, cockfighting and other events in which "someone does, or attempts to, catch, fight or throw [an] animal" but it does not apply to rodeos⁴.

There is no endorsed regulation or code of practice under the Act for governing rodeos. As such, commercial organisations may hold rodeos without permits with varying standards of animal welfare. We believe that rodeos can never be safely regulated yet the current lack of oversight (or prohibition) is indicative of successive governments prioritising rural votes over animals' lives.

Rodeos policy

The Animal Justice Party (AJP) is opposed to rodeos and the use of animals for sport or entertainment (see our policy on Animals in Entertainment). Specifically, we do not believe that rodeos can be safely regulated and promote non-violent alternatives free from animal exploitation.

Key Objectives

1. An immediate ban on "rope and tie",
2. a rapid phase out of all rodeos,
3. increase funding for cruelty-free community sporting events in rural Queensland

¹https://kb.rspca.org.au/what-are-the-welfare-issues-associated-with-rodeos_710.html

²<http://www.peta.org.au/issues/entertainment/whats-wrong-rodeos/>

³<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27136590>

⁴https://kb.rspca.org.au/what-are-the-welfare-issues-associated-with-rodeos_710.html