

Standards for the Care and Treatment of Rodeo Livestock

National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) Position Statement - 10 June 2006

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Part 1 - Introduction

Preface

The role of the [National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare \(NCCAW\)](#) is to provide advice to the Australian Government and assess animal welfare issues. The committee's membership consists of representatives from government, animal industry and community organisations.

This document is the national standard recommended by the NCCAW for managing and controlling rodeos. Its development involved extensive consultation with the major rodeo associations.

All Australian states and territories should adopt its contents when developing rodeo standards.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of these standards is:

- to set minimum requirements for the care and welfare of rodeo livestock, and
- to establish benchmarks for effective co-regulation between industry and animal welfare agencies to ensure animal welfare at all rodeos in Australia.

The standards define the respective responsibilities of everyone involved in conducting rodeos.

General Principles

Proper consideration must be given to the health and welfare of animals used in rodeos. Events and procedures should be designed to prevent cruelty and minimise the impacts on the welfare of rodeo animals.

Those responsible for organising and running rodeos must be appropriately trained to ensure that animal welfare needs are met.

Everyone associated with rodeo animals must comply with prevention of cruelty legislation and follow the national, Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals.

These NCCAW Rodeo Standards are designed to address issues specific to rodeos, and complement legislation and national Codes of Practice.

Rodeo associations should have written rules based on, and consistent with, these standards. The rules should be designed to prevent cruelty and minimise the risk of injury to livestock. Associations should monitor compliance with the standards and enforce them as required.

Associations should have formal accreditation programs for rodeo organisers and stock contractors based on the standards, and actively promote them to everyone involved in running rodeos.

If other animal events not covered by these standards are run in conjunction with a rodeo, then the organising bodies should establish further standards which take into account animal welfare.

Objectives

The objectives of these standards are to:

- protect the welfare of livestock in rodeos
- ensure that rodeo personnel are aware of their responsibilities, as outlined in these standards
- provide guidelines and standards for arena conditions, yard and chute design
- establish criteria for rodeo participants and staff in the handling and care of livestock, and
- provide a basis for monitoring the welfare of animals at rodeos.

Definitions

Unless stated otherwise, the following definitions apply throughout this document:

Rodeo

For the purposes of these standards, a rodeo is a competition using cattle and/or horses, which includes one or more of the following events:

- saddle bronc riding
- bareback bronc riding
- bull riding
- steer riding
- roping and tying
- steer wrestling
- team roping

It is unacceptable to use animals other than cattle and horses in a rodeo. Animal maturity, weight and size are specified for some events.

Rodeo association

An incorporated association established for the purpose of coordinating and assisting in the running of rodeos and/or governing the sport

Rodeo organiser

Someone who instigates and promotes the rodeo. If a committee undertakes these tasks, it must designate, under these standards, a member to take on the responsibilities of rodeo organiser.

Judge

The judge appointed to officiate at a rodeo.

Stock contractor

Someone who provides livestock for rodeo events.

Livestock supervisor

The person who assumes the responsibilities of the stock contractor, if animals are not sourced from a stock contractor.

Veterinarian

A veterinary surgeon appointed by the rodeo organiser, and who must be registered in the Australian state or territory in which the rodeo is held.

Competitor

A competitor in a rodeo event.

[Go to Part 2 - Responsibilities of rodeo personnel](#)

Part 2 - Responsibilities of Rodeo Personnel

Policy Statement

Animals used in rodeos must be treated humanely.

States and territories are encouraged to license rodeos within their jurisdictions to encourage compliance with, and adequate monitoring of, these standards.

The stock contractor, judges, veterinarians and competitors must have a high level of knowledge of these standards, and ensure that the welfare of animals used in rodeos is within their areas of responsibility. They also must comply with relevant animal protection legislation.

Rodeo Organiser's Responsibilities

The rodeo organiser is responsible for:

- ensuring that all equipment owned by the club or association or individual organising the rodeo complies with the requirements of these standards
- appointing the stock contractor and ensuring that the contractor is competent to undertake their duties
- appointing a competent livestock supervisor (if there is no stock contractor) to undertake the duties of the stock contractor
- appointing judges, clowns and pick-up teams (this responsibility may be delegated to the stock contractor)
- appointing the veterinarian (*note that the stock contractor is required to do this in some states) – in jurisdictions where veterinary attendance is not mandatory and where the rodeo is being held in a remote area, the rodeo organiser must make reasonable attempts to secure a veterinarian's services
- ensuring that the veterinarian inspects all animals used in a competition before the start of the rodeo, and each animal after it is used on the program
- ensuring that all personnel are aware of their responsibilities under these standards, and
- providing a rodeo report to the judge, stock contractor and veterinarian for completion.

*If a veterinarian is not in attendance, the rodeo organiser must appoint someone who is experienced and competent to assess and deal with health and welfare problems of cattle and horses, including having the knowledge and means to undertake safe and humane euthanasia. That person must assume the responsibilities of the veterinarian as outlined in this standard.

The rodeo organiser must arrange for this person to be able to contact a veterinarian for advice and direction, if required. If a veterinarian cannot attend, and a rodeo organiser has appointed someone to act in this position, then that person assumes the veterinarian's duties and responsibilities.

Stock Contractor's Responsibilities

The stock contractor is responsible for the welfare, husbandry and handling of all rodeo livestock, except when animals are competing in the arena (where the judge and competitors are responsible).

Rodeo associations are encouraged to accredit stock contractors to ensure that they have the required knowledge of the standards and the skills to comply with them.

The stock contractor must ensure that:

- the welfare requirements of livestock en-route to and from the rodeo are met
- transport and handling of animals is undertaken in accordance with the relevant Model and State Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals, and legislation, including the provision of appropriate food, water and shelter
- all animals supplied are in good health, and all animals used in any event conform to these standards
- yards, chutes and the arena surface are inspected before the rodeo and comply with these standards
- only properly qualified and competent personnel are appointed to care for, handle and treat rodeo livestock
- no stimulant, hypnotic or other substance is used on any animal which is to take part, other than that prescribed by a veterinarian for the legitimate treatment of injury or illness
- unsuitable animals are withdrawn from competition
- if the veterinarian determines that an animal is not suitable for competition that the animal is not used
- cattle and horses are penned separately in the yards and during transport
- aggressive and injured animals are isolated from others, and animals with young at foot are not yarded or used in connection with a rodeo
- proper treatment for any injury is given promptly and, if required, veterinary assistance obtained
- the requirements of these standards are met outside the arena, namely in chutes, yards, surrounding areas and, if aware of non-compliance by other personnel, advise the judge
- all stock handlers used are competent to undertake their duties in compliance with these standards
- require that an animal be turned out of the chute if of the opinion that the risk is unacceptable. The judge may order the stock contractor to release an animal, and
- contribute to the report of the event.

Livestock Supervisor

A livestock supervisor must have the same level of knowledge and competence expected of a **stock contractor** and assume all the stock contractor's duties and responsibilities as outlined in these standards.

Judge's Responsibilities

Judges are responsible for animals competing in the arena. They should have a thorough knowledge of these standards and must ensure that:

- any competitor who breaches these standards in the arena is penalised or reported as appropriate

- any animal which becomes lame, sick, injured or has defective eyesight during the competition is removed from the competition, and direct the person in charge of the animal to seek appropriate treatment for it
- inspections are performed on all competition equipment and ensure that the manner in which the equipment is set or used on the animal complies in all respects with these standards
- a report is provided to the state or territory authority for animal welfare within 21 days of the rodeo being held. The report should provide:
 - the date and location of the rodeo
 - names, addresses and contact details of the rodeo organiser, stock contractor, judge and attending veterinarian.
 - the number and type of events and animals used
 - the number, types, and severity of any animal injuries, and
 - breaches of these standards, and corrective actions taken.
- appropriate action is taken against personnel who fail to comply with these standards and rodeo rules.

Competitors' Responsibilities

Competitors in rodeo events are responsible for the animals they use during an event. All competitors must:

- not treat animals in a way which causes injury or harm
- only use equipment complying with these standards
- obtain prompt and proper treatment for any injury to any animal they use in the competition (other than animals supplied by the contractor), and
- comply with all relevant sections of these standards.

Veterinarian' Responsibilities

Veterinarians must have the necessary experience with cattle and horses to deal with the health and injury issues that might arise in a rodeo.

Veterinarians are responsible for:

- providing expert advice on an animal's health, injury or disease status, and the animal's suitability for competition Veterinarians have the final say on
- inspecting animals before and after events
- dealing with emergencies
- being present during all events (if required by the jurisdiction), and
- contributing to the report of the event.

Go to [Part 3 - Rules for the care of livestock](#)

Part 3 - Rules for the Care of Livestock

Sick and Injured Animals

Stock contractors are responsible for ensuring that no sore, lame, sick, injured, or sight-impaired animal is permitted in the draw. In the absence of a Veterinarian at a rodeo, the [Stock Contractor](#) assumes the [Veterinarian's responsibility](#).

If an animal becomes sick or injured between the time it is drawn and the time it is scheduled to be used, it must not be used.

Sick or injured animals must be given appropriate treatment.

Veterinary Attendance

A veterinarian is the most appropriate person to look after animal welfare issues. A veterinarian should be onsite at all times to handle animal emergencies and to inspect all animals before and after competition. In some jurisdictions, the attendance of a veterinarian is mandatory.

A veterinarian's decision on the suitability of an animal for competition is final.

Response to Serious Stock Injuries

A conveyance must be available to remove a seriously injured animal to a suitable place for further examination and treatment. If an animal is to be euthanised, this must be done humanely.

A seriously injured animal must be yarded such that it is not endangered by other livestock, housed appropriately, and be examined and treated immediately by the veterinarian.

Means to euthanise seriously injured animals, and someone licensed and qualified to do so, must be available at all times while the rodeo is in progress. Livestock must be euthanised in accordance with the national Model and State Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals for the species concerned, and according to legislation.

Injury Prevention

Chutes, yards, lanes and races must be designed, constructed and maintained in a way that minimises the risk of injury to handlers or animals, and assists the quiet and efficient handling of stock.

An animal that repeatedly gets down in the chute, or tries to jump out of it, or becomes excessively excited must be released and examined by the veterinarian. If found to be unfit for any reason, the animal must be withdrawn from participation for that day or session.

Trained people should be available to humanely assist an animal if it gets caught in the chutes, yards or races. Suitable equipment and people should also be on hand to make necessary repairs to these facilities and to ensure that they meet the required standard.

General Safety and Welfare Provisions

Livestock must be removed promptly from the arena after completing an entry.

No small animal or pet will be allowed in the arena or in the line of sight of livestock without the judge's consent. Note: legislation in some states prohibits the presence of small animals or pets in the arena.

Livestock must not be directly exposed to fireworks that are likely to cause fear or distress. Some states legislate the use of fireworks.

[Go to Part 4 - Equipment requirements and specifications](#)

Part 4 - Equipment Requirements and Specifications

Rodeo Livestock Handling Equipment

All livestock must be treated humanely, and handling equipment must not be used cruelly or excessively.

Equipment for livestock-handling must be of the type and specification generally used to transport and handle horses and cattle, and must comply with the national Model and State Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals for the species concerned, and with appropriate legislation.

Electric prods

Electric prods may be used under the following conditions:

- they must be of low amperage and powered by dry cell batteries only
- be of a type and standard used generally for the handling, yarding and transport of livestock
- used with restraint and restricted to the minimum amount necessary as an aid for loading and handling livestock (including to encourage an animal that is down and leaning heavily against the chute to re-position), and
- applied only to those parts of the animal covered by hair.

Electric prods must not be used in time events:

- if an animal is loaded and standing in the time event chute/box, or
- to send an animal into the arena when the chute/box gate is opened.

Electric prods must not be used in riding events:

- when an animal is secured in the chute (except in the circumstances above), or
- when the chute gate opens, unless it is necessary to protect both the animal and the contestant from possible injury against the chute or chute gate, or to turn out a chute-stalling animal. In such cases the prod may be applied only to the animal's shoulder or hindquarters to clear it from the chute, and under the stock contractor's direct supervision.

An electric prod may not be used in the arena under any circumstances.

Handling aids

The use of aids such as flappers, metallic rattles and light polythene tubing to encourage movement in response to sound is acceptable, and for handling animals in yards, lanes and races.

The use of aids such as sticks, lengths of heavy plastic, metal piping, fencing wire or heavy leather belts to strike or poke animals with enough force to cause pain or injury, is not permitted.

Event Equipment

Event equipment is used to assist the event and should be designed to ensure that the animal is not injured. The equipment's owner is responsible for its suitability. Equipment must conform to the specifications below.

Spurs

Spurs are used to help the rider's timing and purchase on the animal in bucking stock events and should not be used as a goad. To reduce possible injury to the animal, the spur rowel must be dulled and not less than 3mm wide at its narrowest part. The minimum diameter to the point of the rowel is 2cm.

For bucking horse events, the rowels must be free running.

For bull riding, the rowels may have restricted movement but must not be fully locked, and be able to move at least a quarter turn.

Flank straps

Flank straps are used to improve the animal's bucking style. Only lined, quick release straps can be used. The lining must be soft and flexible such as a soft plastic, felt or sheepskin.

The strap's lined portion must be positioned to cover both flanks of the animal and its belly. The coverings and linings must be soft and flexible, and must not be worn or damaged. Sharp or cutting objects must not be used.

Protective horn wraps

Horn wraps must be used in team-roping to protect the ears, eyes and base of horns from possible injury.

Neck ropes

The neck rope is used to keep the horse's head towards the steer while the rider dismounts, and to discourage dragging. The rope must be fitted to horses used for roping and tying. The catch rope must pass through it before it is tied to the saddle horn.

The neck rope must be no more than half the distance down the roping horse's neck, as measured from the head.

Jerk line

The jerk line is used for roping and tying events. The rope is fed from the bridle through a pulley on the saddle to the rider.

As the rider dismounts to throw the steer, the jerk line plays out in a series of jerks, which encourages the horse to move backwards slowly, retaining the tension on the rope, thus preventing entanglements.

The contestant must adjust the catch rope, reins and jerk line to prevent the rope horse from dragging the roped animal.

[Go to Part 5 - Stock selection and use](#)

Part 5 - Stock Selection and Use

Stock Source

Ideally, a stock contractor should supply all rodeo stock. It is acknowledged, however, that in some areas and for some events local stock may be used. Where there is no stock contractor the rodeo organiser must designate a **livestock supervisor** to assume the responsibilities of the **stock contractor**.

Horses

Horses used in rodeo rough-stock events must be mature, sound and fit for the intended use. Age should not be used as the sole criterion of maturity; other factors such as size and physical conformation must be taken into account.

The criterion for determining the suitability of a rodeo bucking horse should be complete epiphyseal closure. This can best be determined by the presence of the central adult incisors in wear, or, where there is doubt, by radiography.

Horses under three years old may not be mature enough for bucking events and must not be used.

Horses used for bucking events may not be used on more than three occasions in a day.

If a time-event horse shows signs of injury or fatigue, it must not be used.

Cattle

All cattle must be fit, healthy and suitable for the intended use. The number of times that cattle may be used in competition varies according to the rigours of the event and the conditioning of the cattle to rodeo competition.

The following limitations must be observed:

- the same cattle must not be used for steer wrestling and roping events on the same day
- cattle may not be used for steer wrestling and roping more than three times on any one day for contract stock, and twice a day for local stock, including practice for events and the event itself
- cattle may not be used as bucking stock more than three times on any day, including practice for events, and the event itself, and
- each competitor is allowed only one loop (throw) in roping and tying events and, in team roping, only two loops are allowed in each team.

Selection of Animals for Rope and Tie

Cattle used in roping and tying must be fit, healthy and without defects. The optimum weight for roping and tying is 115kg, with a minimum of 100kg and a maximum of 130kg. Note: some states have varying restrictions on minimum weight of animals in some states.

Selection of Animals for Steer Wrestling

Animals used in steer wrestling must be fit, healthy and without defects. The optimum weight for animals is 250kg, with a minimum of 200kg and a maximum of 300kg. All animals must have suitable horns, which must be a minimum of 23cm long.

Selection of Animals for Team Roping

Animals used in team roping must be fit, healthy and without defects. The optimum weight for animals in team roping is 250kg, with a minimum of 200kg and a maximum of 300kg. All animals must have suitable horns, which must be a minimum of 17cm long.

[Go to Part 6 - Arena selection and use](#)

Part 6 - Arena Selection and Use

Arena, Chutes and Yards

The veterinarian and the stock contractor must be assured that the arena, chutes, yards and races will not compromise the animals' welfare.

Surfaces

The [stock contractor](#) is responsible for ensuring the arena surface provides traction, stability, reduction of shock and improved safety for personnel and livestock.

In general, the standard arena should be a suitable, soil-based surface, rotary-hoed or softened to a depth of about 8-10cm, and must be free of rocks, holes and obstacles.

Other surfaces may be used if they are well drained, provide secure footing and are at least as safe for the animals as an appropriate soil-based surface.

Size

Too small an area for an event creates a danger to livestock, competitors and spectators. The arena must be big enough for the events taking place.

Fencing

The rodeo organiser is responsible for fencing around the arena. The stock contractor must inspect and approve fencing before the rodeo. A stock contractor supplying the fencing is also responsible for its suitability.

Careful planning and construction of arenas will make handling and removing stock easier, and will also increase stock, competitor and public safety. The top rail of arenas should be made of steel to prevent breakage in the event of an attempted escape by an animal.

The construction, height and appearance of arena fencing should discourage stock from attempting to push through the fence or jump over it. There must be no protrusions on fences or gateways that are likely to cause injury.

Arena fences should be clearly visible and not appear open to the animal.

If it is thought that stock will pressure certain points of an arena more than others, care should be taken to ensure that the fencing is suitable.

Portable arenas

Portable arenas must have suitably braced and secure panels. The minimum height should be 1.8 metres. A stock contractor supplying fencing, yards or chutes is responsible for ensuring that they comply with these standards.

Fixed arenas

Fixed arenas should be of secure construction and flush on the inside. If cable is used in steel arenas, it should be strained and the space between the cables should not be wide enough to allow stock to pass through it. The minimum height should be at least 1.6 metres.

Time-event chute

The time-event chute for steer wrestling must be at least 75cm wide at the animal's head height in the chute and when the gate is open.

[Go to Part 7 - Specific rodeo events](#)

Part 7 - Specific Rodeo Events

All Events

The [judges](#) have the final decision on the suitability of equipment. Any equipment, either on the animal or which may be used on the animal, and which may compromise its welfare, is not

allowed. A judge may instruct anyone to remove or modify equipment for which they are responsible, in accordance with these standards.

Saddle Bronc Riding

The saddle must not be set too far forward on the withers and must be correctly fitted. The minimum under the gullet of the saddle must be 10cm. Sharp or cutting objects must not be used in a cinch, saddle or girth.

The front cinch must be a minimum of 12.5cm wide. The back cinch must not be over-tightened.

Bareback Bronc Riding

The bareback rigging must not be more than 26cm wide at the handhold, and no more than 16cm wide at the D rings.

Suitable pads must be placed under the rigging and extend a minimum of 5cm past the back of the rigging. The girth on rigging must be no less than 12.5cm wide.

Bull Riding

The equipment used in bull-riding rigging shall be a loose rope with or without a hand-hold. There must be no knots or hitches preventing the rope from falling from the animal after the contestant has been thrown or dismounted. A contestant must not re-set and re-pull the rope more than twice if the bull is standing quietly in the chute.

Roping and Tying

Note: calf roping is not permitted in Victoria. Steer roping is allowed if the steer's bodyweight is at least 200kg .

Limits

The time limit to rope, throw by hand and complete the tie is 30 seconds from when the barrier is released. After the tie is completed and the time signalled, the roper must immediately mount the horse and ride it forward to loosen the catch rope.

Only one loop is allowed per contestant in each round of the event. If the first throw fails to catch the animal the roper is not permitted a second throw to prevent prolonged chasing of an animal around the arena.

Jerking Down and Dragging

Pulling an animal backward off its feet (jerk down) or dragging a roped animal are unacceptable. Contestants must use an appropriate technique, and appropriate and properly fitted equipment, to protect the animal against an abrupt stop after it has been roped, and to prevent the rope horse from dragging the roped animal.

A contestant who continues to tie the calf after the 30 second siren, or after the calf is jerked down or dragged, should be disqualified.

Contestants will be deemed to have been in breach of these standards if they:

- pull the calf backwards off its feet, or
- drag it more than one metre after it is tied.

Steer Wrestling

Time limit

The time limit to catch and throw the steer is 30 seconds from when the barrier is released.

Legal Throws

The steer must not be knocked down or thrown before the catch is made, and it is brought to a stop. If the animal is off its feet before a legal throw is made, it must stand on all four feet and be properly thrown.

Team Roping Protective Horn Wraps

Horn wraps must be used in team roping to protect the ears, eyes and base of horns from possible injury.

Time limit

The time limit to rope the head and the heels of the steer is 30 seconds from when the barrier is released. The time will be taken when the steer is properly roped with the catch ropes dallied, with both horses facing the steer, and with no slack in the ropes.

To prevent slack being taken up too hard, both horses' front feet should be on the ground when the time is taken.

Only two loops are allowed in each round of the event (one for the header and one for the heeler). If a throw fails to catch the animal, the ropers are not permitted a second attempt to prevent the prolonged chasing of an animal around the arena.

Catching

The steer must be standing when it is roped by both the header and the heeler, and not be roughly handled. The only permitted head catches for team-roping are around both horns, the neck, or around a half head. The heel catch should be around both back legs, including behind the shoulders, provided the catch is made over the heels.

The heeler should not attempt a heel catch before the header has dallied his catch rope and changed the direction of the steer.

Acknowledgment

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NCCAW also acknowledges the support and advice of the National Rodeo Council of Australia, the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, and other rodeo associations which contributed to the development of these standards.

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