

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

rented from stock contractors. Far removed from the range, these animals spend most of their lives in cramped quarters and transportation vehicles and do not always receive proper medical care. Indifference to the welfare of these animals is built into the system of rodeo judging: a contestant's score is based on how long he/she can ride an unwilling animal or how quickly he/she can overpower an animal (the force of whose resistance actually adds to the contestant's score). Rodeo contestants are rarely penalized for injuring or killing an animal. Events differ from rodeo to rodeo, but the most common rodeo events are bronc riding, bull riding, calf roping, and steer wrestling.



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# BUCKING THE MYTH



THE CRUEL REALITY OF RODEOS



**M**any people believe that rodeos provide harmless entertainment, but The HSUS, after many years of investigating this so-called sport, knows that what takes place at rodeos is just another form of animal cruelty. Contrary to the myth perpetuated by the rodeo industry, rodeos do not educate people about ranching skills important in the Old West. In fact, rodeo events have been created specifically for public entertainment. And the animals used in rodeos do not live on ranches, cared for by the contestants. They are animals who have been



Frequently subjected to tail twisting and electric shocks in holding chutes, calves used in calf-roping events are often jerked into the air and smashed to the ground when lassoed by contestants.

### BRONC RIDING

A bronc-riding contestant is judged on how long he/she can stay on the back of a bucking horse. The contestant wears spurs, using them frequently on the horse's neck and shoulders. Because a contestant earns higher scores if the horse bucks wildly, a leather cinch called a flank strap is tightened around the horse's sensitive abdominal area. The rodeo industry claims that horses used in bronc-riding events buck because they are wild and want to rid

themselves of their riders. In fact, a horse in this event stops bucking not when the contestant is thrown but when the strap is released!

### BULL RIDING

Contestants in bull-riding events vie to see who can have the longest, most dramatic ride. The event begins with the bull being restrained in a tiny chute and having a rope with a bell tied around his midsection and another rope tightened around his sensitive abdominal area.

Contestants often pull the ropes back and forth over the bull's abdominal area to rub the skin raw, making the ropes tied there even more painful. It is common for a bull to be shocked repeatedly with an electric cattle prod while in the chute. When the chute is finally opened, the bull runs and bucks in an attempt to escape the torment—to the crowd, the bucking bull appears only to be angry at the rider on his back.



Struggling to escape an agonizingly tight strap and the goaling of a contestant's spurs, a horse crashes to the ground.

### CALF ROPING

In a calf-roping event, a contestant's score is based on how quickly he/she can rope a running calf from horseback, dismount, and tie the calf's legs together. The calf is often subjected to tail twisting or shocking by electric prod to propel him/her from the holding chute. Often as the rope tightens around the calf's neck, he/she is jerked into the air and then smashed to the ground. This event makes brutal mockery of calf roping as it was once practiced on the range. On the range, the object was to capture and immobilize a calf without doing harm. In a rodeo, the object is only to capture and immobilize a calf as quickly as possible—whether the calf is injured or even killed has no bearing on a contestant's score.

### STEER WRESTLING

In a steer-wrestling event (also known as bull-dogging), a mounted contestant chases a steer out of a chute, hurls him- or herself on top of the steer, and twists the steer's neck viciously until the animal is forced to the ground. Steers are often injured in this event, but the contestants are seldom penalized.

Similar rodeo events include steer busting, in which a contestant jerks a steer off his feet with a rope, and team steer roping, in which a two-contestant team lassos a steer's head or horns and hind feet while pulling him in opposite directions to bring him to the ground.

### WE SAY NO TO RODEO

The HSUS opposes rodeos because the animals are subjected to harassment, stress, and torment. It is not uncommon for animals in rodeos to be severely injured or even killed. Rodeo events are not accurate, harmless portrayals of ranching skills; rather, rodeos dis-

play and encourage brutal treatment of animals for entertainment and profit. The HSUS works to increase the public's awareness of the suffering endured by animals in rodeos and thereby put an end to that suffering.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Expose rodeos—distribute copies of this brochure to members of your community.
2. Act immediately if a rodeo is scheduled in your community: write letters to the editors of your local newspapers outlining rodeo's cruelties and ask the event's local sponsors to withdraw their support or to agree not to sponsor rodeos in the future.
3. Protest to major corporations that sponsor or benefit from rodeos, urging them to dissociate themselves from this cruel display. If a company learns that consumers oppose rodeos, it may rethink its policy on such events.
4. Work to ban rodeos within city or county limits. If you cannot enact a community ban, pursue an ordinance prohibiting the use of cruel devices such as flank straps and spurs.



A bull's backs are the result of shocks from electric prods and chafing ropes that rub his flesh raw.

Write to The HSUS for a model of such an ordinance.

To purchase a copy of our six-minute video *Bucking the Myth: The Cruel Reality of Rodeos*, send a check or money order for \$10 plus \$3 shipping and handling (payable to The HSUS) to "Bucking the Myth," The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037. For more information about rodeos or to order more copies of this brochure, contact The HSUS.



When "wrestled," steers are chased by mounted contestants, jumped on, and twisted by the neck until they are forced to the ground. Many steers are hurt in these events.