



Canadian Federation of Humane Societies

Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux

August 4, 2017

Ms. Cathy Oss
Acting President
Chilliwack Agricultural Society
7590 Lickman Road
Chilliwack, BC V2R 4A7

Dear Ms. Oss,

Re: Chilliwack Fair – Review of Tie-Down Roping and Steer Wrestling

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) in support of a thorough review of tie-down roping and steer wrestling by the Chilliwack Fair Board of Directors. The CFHS is the national organization representing humane societies and SPCAs across the country. Canadians have depended upon humane societies and SPCAs for nearly 150 years to enforce animal protection laws and care for the abused and abandoned animals in our communities.

The CFHS opposes rodeo events such as tie-down roping (also known as calf roping) and steer wrestling due to the serious risk posed to the health and safety of the animals involved in these types of rodeo events. The CFHS strongly advocates for the showcasing of low-stress animal handling skills and horse riding rodeo events that do not pose such a high risk to the health and safety of the animals.

Tie-Down Roping (Calf Roping)

As you are aware, in calf roping young calves are compelled to run at speeds in excess of 40km per hour and then roped. They burst out of the gate at such speed because they are goaded and prodded in the holding chute until they are released - only to be stopped short or 'clotheslined', with a choking rope around the neck. Calves are often injured, and some are occasionally killed in this event.

It is also the case that rodeo calf ropers must spend a great deal of time practicing in order to become proficient at their event. Calves sold to practice pens are roped over and over until they are injured or killed. Tie-down roping is an expensive rodeo event, upwards of two or three calves are injured per practice session and must be replaced. And it is not just the risk of injury that is the problem with tie-down roping. It's also the fear, anxiety, and pain that this event imposes on a very young calf that makes it so inhumane.

Steer Wrestling

As you are aware, steer wrestling also causes injuries and death to the animals involved. Again, through goading and prodding in the holding chute, the steer comes out of the gate at tremendous speed. The rodeo contestant then leaps from his horse, grabs the horns of the steer and twists the animal's neck until it succumbs and falls to the ground. As you are no doubt aware, it is not uncommon for animals to



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sustain serious injuries during this event and to die. Animals died during the steer wrestling event at the Calgary Stampede in 2013 and 2014, their necks being broken.

An Alternative

The Cloverdale Rodeo in Surrey dropped tie-down roping and steer wrestling, as well as two other events, from its rodeo program in 2007 in response to concerns about animal health and safety. Nonetheless, the Cloverdale Rodeo has attracted healthy crowds every year since then without these roping events. It is clear that making the rodeo more humane had no negative impact on attendance, with over 100,000 attendees in 2016.¹ If the Chilliwack Fair and other Canadian rodeos followed suit they would likely find a similar reaction from the public.

Conclusion

We strongly support the removal of tie-down roping and steer wrestling from the Chilliwack Fair's program. Such a measure would eliminate the unnecessary risk to the health and safety of the animals associated with these rodeo events.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Barbara Cartwright
CEO

¹ <http://www.news1130.com/2016/05/23/cloverdale-rodeo-attendance/>