

## What is a rodeo?

Rodeos are a form of so-called entertainment where cows, bulls and horses are taunted with equipment into displaying supposedly 'wild' behaviours for an audience.

## Are there rodeos in Australia?

Yes.  
Rodeos are held in all States and in the Northern Territory.



Bungendore Rodeo, NSW

### About us

The Animal Defenders Office (ADO) is an accredited, not-for-profit community legal centre that specialises in animal law. Our mission is to use the law to protect animals. This includes:

- ◆ providing free advice about animals and the law;
- ◆ increasing public awareness about how the law affects animals; and
- ◆ working to reform the law to improve protection for animals.

### How to help

The ADO relies solely on the generosity of the public to stay in operation. We do not receive any government funding, and all our lawyers and officers are volunteers.

If you would like to donate, please go to our website at [www.ado.org.au](http://www.ado.org.au).

Thank you

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# Rodeos and the Law

Animal Defenders Office **Fact Sheet**



Cooma Rodeo, NSW



Animal Defenders  
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## Are there animal welfare concerns with rodeos?

There are animal welfare concerns during both the conduct of and preparation for rodeos. During the actual events serious welfare issues relate to the use of flank or bucking straps, electric prods<sup>1</sup>, spurs, and extremely rough roping and handling of the animals. These practices can lead to injuries ranging from broken bones, snapped necks, ripped tendons and ligaments, and torn tails, to punctured lungs, haemorrhaging, and other internal organ damage.

Rodeo animals are also subject to abuses during practice sessions<sup>2</sup>, and various stresses connected with transportation and associated confinement.<sup>3</sup>

## Are rodeos banned anywhere?

Yes, rodeos or the use of certain animals are banned in some Australian jurisdictions.

Rodeos are **banned completely in the Australian Capital Territory** (“ACT”). A person commits a criminal offence if the person conducts or takes part in a rodeo in the ACT (*Animal Welfare Act 1992* (ACT) s 18(1)). The offence is punishable by imprisonment for one year or a penalty of up to \$16,000, or both.

Victoria and South Australia have banned the use of animals under 200 kg (ie calves) in rodeos (*Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019* (VIC) reg 82; *Animal Welfare Regulations 2012* (SA) reg 19(1)(a)).

## How are rodeos regulated in NSW?

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (NSW) contains specific offences for ‘animal baiting’ (s18), bull fighting (s18A), and certain animal-catching activities where an animal is released from confinement to be chased, caught or confined (s20).

These offences would effectively outlaw rodeos, so the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012* (NSW) specifically **exempts** rodeos from these offences (reg 36).

The exemption applies, however, only if the rodeo is conducted in accordance with the ‘relevant Code of Practice’ (reg 36(3)).

## RODEOS—THE CODE

The relevant code is the ‘Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events’ (the Code). The Code was approved in 1988 by the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

The Code specifically states that it is ‘based on knowledge available at the time of publication and should be reviewed at intervals of no longer than 2 years to maintain the highest possible standards.’ After over 28 years, **no such review has occurred.**

## RODEOS—PRODDING

According to the Code: ‘No animal shall be ... cruelly prodded’ (3.10). The Code does not define what ‘cruelly’ means in this context.

The Code also states that ‘Standard electric prods shall be used as little as possible ... Cattle may only be prodded in the shoulder or rump. A prod may only be used instantaneously on the shoulder of a bucking horse to clear it from the chute on opening of the gate...’ (3.11). If cattle or horses were ‘cruelly prodded’ or the prod was used excessively or not on the specified parts of the body, it could be argued that the Code may have been breached.



Queanbeyan rodeo, NSW

## RODEOS—CALF ROPING

The Code states that ‘Rodeo associations are to ensure that arrangements are made for the **phasing out by 20 June 1989, of calf-roping** in a form which permits the abrupt stopping of calves when roped’ (4.23).



Cooma rodeo, NSW

It also says: ‘Jerking down refers to the 180° flipping over of a calf onto its back which may occur when it is roped. No animal may be jerked down, and a contestant who jerks down an animal will be disqualified’ (4.21).

Despite industry claims about using certain rope devices that reduce ‘abrupt stopping’ of the calves, to this day most calf-roping involves jerking down and contestants are not disqualified or fined for doing it.



Queanbeyan rodeo, NSW

## REFERENCES:

1. “[C]attle are highly susceptible to electrical current. Cows can detect electrical voltage when humans, dogs and horses cannot.” (Quoted in Peggy W. Larson, “Rodeo Is Cruel Entertainment,” *Pace Environmental Law Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1998, p. 118).
2. “Dr. T. K. Hardy, a veterinarian who was also a calf roper, was quoted in Newsweek, stating that calf roping is an expensive sport, and that two or three calves are injured per practice session and must be replaced.” (Quoted in Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, <http://goo.gl/RYX7uf>).
3. Animal Liberation Queensland, <http://alq.org.au/rodeos> and Larson, 1998, p. 117.

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