

ProRodeo Livestock



Rodeo Livestock

Quick Facts

- ✓ The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) has strict standards to protect the safety of livestock athletes at the rodeo.
- ✓ PRCA rules require a veterinarian on-site at all sanctioned competition.
- ✓ Flank straps used on bucking horses and bulls are used to encourage the bucking stock to buck with proper form, kicking their legs behind them. Flank straps are lined with soft sheepskin or Neoprene for the animals' comfort.
- ✓ Veterinarian's report the livestock is well cared for and the injury rate is extremely low - averaging five-hundredths of one percent.
- ✓ PRCA rules restricts the use of cattle prods to occasions when they are necessary to protect the safety of the animal or contestant, and limited to the power equivalent of two D batteries.

table of contents

- 4 prorrodeo livestock
- 7 events
- 9 equipment
- 11 stock contractors
- 13 professional judges
- 14 PRCA's commitment
- 15 PRCA rules
- 16 fact versus fiction
- 19 summary

“I’m really proud
of the way PRCA
stock contractors
take care of their
livestock and I
think they are
trendsetters in the
area of animal
welfare.”

— Dr. John Wenzel
New Mexico
Extension Veterinarian

PROFESSIONAL RODEO
COWBOYS ASSOCIATION
101 Pro Rodeo Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80919
(719) 593-8840
www.prorrodeo.com
animalwelfare@prorrodeo.com
Published 2010

ProRodeo Livestock

“The AVMA recommends that all rodeos adopt, implement, and enforce rules to ensure humane treatment of rodeo livestock.”

— excerpt from AVMA position statement supported by PRCA

Rodeo is a partnership between animal and cowboy. Without healthy bucking horses like these on the Three Hills Rodeo Ranch in Iowa, there would be not rodeo.

In the sport of professional rodeo, cowboys share the limelight with horses, bulls, calves and steers. For cowboys to compete at the highest level, the rodeo livestock must be in peak condition. Both are athletes in their own right. The very nature of rodeo requires a working relationship between the cowboys and animal athletes.

Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) athletes value their animals, as do the PRCA stock contractors that provide livestock for rodeos. Like most people, PRCA members believe animals should be provided proper care and treatment. The PRCA has through the years created a comprehensive set of rules developed to protect rodeo livestock.

Consistent, proper treatment of livestock by PRCA members in and out of the arena has been well documented by veterinarians who have witnessed the health and condition of the animals first hand. “The PRCA sets the standard for humane care of rodeo animal athletes,” said Dr. Jennifer Schleining, a Ames, Iowa, equine veterinarian, in my professional opinion, rodeo remains a healthy, humane, family-oriented sport.”

The PRCA supports the position statement of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) regarding the welfare of animals in spectator events. The statement reads in part, “The AVMA recommends that all rodeos adopt, implement, and enforce rules to ensure humane treatment of rodeo livestock.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE HILLS RODEO

In 2003, the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) awarded its Lavin Cup to the PRCA in recognition of the association's contributions to the health and welfare of the horse. Like a well-conditioned athlete, an animal can perform well only if it is healthy. Any cowboy will tell you he takes home a paycheck only when the livestock is in top form. Stock contractors, the ranchers who raise and provide livestock to rodeos, also have an obvious financial interest in keeping the animals healthy. Simple logic dictates that no sensible businessperson would abuse an animal that is expected to perform in the future.

PRCA's approximately 6,000 members have more than economic ties to animals. Nearly all have lived and worked around animals for most of their lives and they possess a high degree of respect and fondness for livestock.

Stock contractor Harry Vold of Harry Vold Rodeo Company in Avondale, Colorado, said he holds a special place in his heart for his animals.

"We like to keep our horses around forever," said Vold. "It's like an old folks home, and it can get costly, but they've earned their keep."

Anyone who attends a PRCA rodeo can be assured that the greatest care has been taken to prevent injury to animals or contestants. PRCA members are bound by the not-for-profit corporation's bylaws and rules, which include a section that deals exclusively with the treatment of animals. The association's rules include 60 that deal with the care and handling of the livestock. Judges report violations to the PRCA Headquarters, which may levy fines, suspension or expulsion.

Professional rodeo judges, who are responsible for the enforcement of all PRCA rules support these rules and do not hesitate to report violations. Becoming a PRCA judge involves extensive training in the skills needed to evaluate livestock and to judge rodeo events, as well as testing of that knowledge. PRCA rodeo judges undergo constant training and evaluation to ensure their skills are sharp and that they are enforcing PRCA rules, especially those regarding the care and handling of rodeo livestock.

In 2003, the
American
Association of
Equine
Practitioners
(AAEP) awarded
its Lavin
Cup to the
PRCA in
recognition
of the
association's
contributions to
the health and
welfare of the
horse.



PRCA PHOTO BY GINNY SCHONHOLTZ

Rodeo committees and stock contractors work together to insure the livestock have safe and comfortable facilities while they are at a rodeo. These bucking bulls are shown enjoying hay in the new stock pens at the Pendleton Roundup.



PRCA rules govern the specification of all equipment used, including these bareback riding riggings which must have padding between the rigging and the horse.

One of the many PRCA rules that protect animals authorizes the judges to report any member that is found not treating an animal properly at a PRCA rodeo in the arena or on the rodeo grounds.

“Much of our educational efforts with the judges is concerning the proper care and handling of rodeo livestock,” said Tommy Keith, PRCA’s Director of Judging and longtime PRCA judge. “The judges definitely call any violations they are aware of. This doesn’t happen too often at PRCA rodeos because of the connection of our members to the livestock.”

Not all rodeos operate under guidelines as strict as the PRCA’s. The PRCA sanctions about 30 percent of the rodeos held in the United States. Another 50 percent are sanctioned by smaller rodeo organizations, and about 20 percent are not sanctioned. The PRCA hosts periodic rodeo industry conferences to network on rules and livestock welfare issues with other rodeo associations. This outreach effort has resulted in most rodeo-sanctioning associations adopting and enforcing regulations regarding the care and treatment of animals, though some may not be as stringent as the PRCA’s rules.

Pro Rodeo Events

Rodeo action poses little risk to the animals. A recent survey conducted during 194 PRCA rodeo performances and 78 sections of slack indicated the injury rate for animals is so low that it is statistically negligible.

Of the 75, 472 animal exposures, 28 animals were injured, according to the data compiled by on-site veterinarians. That translates to an injury rate of less than four-hundredths of 1 percent — 0.00037 to be exact.

Every veterinarian who took part in the survey indicated that the animals were well-cared-for, and the livestock areas and competition grounds were in good condition, providing a safe environment for the livestock.

The survey's results showing extremely low animal injury rates in professional rodeo were consistent with data gathered through other informational surveys over the years.

Rodeo livestock perform for less than a minute in any rodeo event. The horses and bulls used in the roughstock events buck for only eight seconds. The timed events don't last much longer; all have time limits of a minute or less.

Roughstock events

Three of rodeo's most physically challenging events — saddle bronc riding, bareback riding and bull riding — rely on horses and bulls that can kick high and buck powerfully. While critics of these events have said some of the equipment — the flank strap, prod and spurs — compel the animals to buck, veterinarians and others familiar with the behavior of large animals know otherwise.

"These are not animals who are forced to buck and perform in the arena," said Dr. Eddie Taylor, the attending veterinarian for La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, a PRCA rodeo in Tucson, Ariz. "In fact, if a flank strap is drawn so tight as to be uncomfortable, the horses and bulls will likely cease to buck or not perform to the best of their ability. The best rodeo livestock are those with a natural inclination to buck for the purpose of unseating a rider."

Bucking horses are not wild, but they aren't saddle-broken either. According to veterinarians, horses buck naturally—some much harder than others. The horse's bone structure and well-muscled hindquarters enable it to buck and kick high.

PRCA stock contractors, who spend a lot of time, effort and money breeding and purchasing top bucking animals and they know better than anyone that only a small percentage of animals have the desire to buck. Today, a number of breeding programs are in place specifically to breed bucking animals.

"It's part of them," said Ike Sankey of Sankey Rodeos in Joliet, Mont. "Their mother bucked; their daddy bucked. They like people, but they like to buck. The horses and bulls enjoy what they're doing, but if you hurt them, they won't do it anymore."

Rodeo contestants and stock contractors, who have a substantial investment in the animals, share a similar philosophy, which includes a sincere regard for the talent of the animals and the need for quality and humane care for them.

Most bulls weigh more than 1,500 pounds, compared with the 150 pounds of the average bull rider. And bulls have a hide that is up to seven times thicker than human skin.

Equine veterinarians say rodeo's bucking horses are well-suited for rodeo competition.

PRCA PHOTO BY MIKE COPEMAN





PRCA PHOTOS BY MIKE CORMAN

Bucking bulls are extremely valuable, as well as talented athletes that tip the scales at nearly one ton.



In tie-down roping, rules require livestock to weigh between 220 and 280 pounds. All animals are inspected prior to competition to insure only healthy animals participate.



PRCA rules require tough Corriente steers in the steer wrestling event.

Roping events

Rodeo's three roping events—tie-down roping, team roping and steer roping—have origins in everyday ranch life, where roping skills are still used everyday on ranches to doctor cattle on the range. Economics dictate that livestock owners ensure the health and welfare of their cattle. This applies not only to timed-event stock in the roping and steer wrestling events, but also to cattle on ranches that are handled with similar methods for sorting and branding.

In competition, the roping events showcase the talents of both the contestant and his horse. To successfully compete in any of the three, the contestant needs not only well-honed roping skills, but also a well-trained and intuitive horse. Roping in the competition arena closely resembles what the animals would undergo routinely on a ranch.

"I personally have not seen a serious neck injury to a tie-down roping calf in my 16 years as attending veterinarian at Tucson's La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros and other Arizona rodeos," said Dr. Taylor.

PRCA rules, stock contractors, judges and the cowboys all play integral parts in ensuring that roping stock are properly handled.

In tie-down roping, a calf must weigh between 220 and 280 pounds.

PRCA rules also stipulate the calf must be strong and healthy, and PRCA judges inspect the animals to ensure that no sick or injured livestock is used.

Most calves don't compete more than a few dozen times in their lives because of weight and usage restrictions and the fact that calves grow so rapidly.

Steers are used in the remaining two roping events. The tough and robust Mexican Corrientes are the livestock of choice for team roping and steer roping because of their endurance and strength. The steers used in team roping have a 650-pound limit.

PRCA rules stipulate that the horns on the steers used in team roping and steer roping must be protected during performances. Also, steer-roping cattle must be inspected two weeks before an event to make sure they're fit.

Steer wrestling

Steer wrestling is an event involving a Corriente steer weighing at least 450 pounds and a man who most likely weighs less than half that amount.

"It's highly improbable that a man could injure a steer during the steer wrestling event," said Dr. Doug Corey, a large animal veterinarian from Pendleton, Oregon.

A cowboy who hopes to win at steer wrestling must employ finesse. Steer wrestling involves careful positioning and leverage to enable the animal to be placed on its side.

Equipment

Veterinarians who have experience caring for rodeo livestock say rodeo gear is safe, including the flank strap, spurs and prod. Each piece of equipment has a specific purpose and PRCA rules governing its use and placement.

All of the veterinarians contacted while compiling this publication reported the horses and bulls are well suited for the bucking events and the flank strap enhances the animals bucking action and does not cause injury. Many veterinarians have, in fact, have testified before legislative bodies that the flank strap does not injure animals. All agreed the prod presents no danger to an animal's health. Many experts said they find the prod to be the most humane method of herding and moving livestock.

The flank strap

Bucking animals are born, not made, and the flank strap cannot magically turn a placid animal into a championship buckner, according to experts. When placed on an animal naturally inclined to buck, the flank strap simply augments the bucking action, encouraging a bucking bronc or bull to kick high with its back feet.

PRCA rules stipulate that horse flank straps must be lined with sheepskin or Neoprene and must utilize a quick-release fastener. No sharp or cutting objects are placed between the strap and the animal, and the sheepskin-covered portion must be placed over both flanks and the belly of the animal. Flank straps used on bucking bulls may be a soft cotton 2/3 inch rope. The straps do not come in contact with the genitalia or fasten so tightly as to cause pain.

Equine experts agree on use of the flank strap. "The flank strap produces mild pressure on the flanks, but not so much as to hurt the animal," said Dr. Doug Corey, a large animal veterinarian from Pendleton, Oregon. "It might be compared to wearing a snug belt. Bucking is simply the horse's action to rid itself of a foreign object."

The flank straps used in rodeo are never tight enough to immobilize or cause pain, and they don't injure an animal. A horse has 18 ribs, the last several which protect its kidneys. The flank strap is placed behind the rib cage, eliminating any chance that the strap might injure the kidneys.

"The flank straps cause absolutely no harm to the horses or cattle, fitting much like a snug belt around our waist," said Dr. Jim Furman, a mixed-practice veterinarian in Alliance, Nebraska.



PRCA PHOTO BY DAN HUBBELL

A horse's hide
is
almost three
times as
thick as
human skin,
and the hide
of a bull
is about seven
times thicker.

Only spurs with dull rowels, like this one used in bareback riding, are allowed in PRCA competition.



PRCA PHOTO BY KIRT STEINKE

Dr. Ben Espy, an equine veterinarian who practices in both San Antonio, Texas, and Lexington, Kentucky, said, “The flank strap does not interfere with any of the external genitalia that are actually in between the back legs, not in the flank area where the strap is.”

The prod

The prod, powered by flashlight batteries, is used to move livestock on ranches and, on occasion, to move the animals into the chutes at professional rodeos.

PRCA rules govern the use of the prod during competition. The prod may only be used during competition to move livestock if it is stalled in the chute or if it is at risk of injury. The rules also state that the prod can be used only on the animal's hip or shoulder areas, where nerve endings are not as dense and the sensation is weaker.

A horse's hide is almost three times as thick as human skin, and the hide of a bull is virtually seven times thicker. A horse's hide might be compared to the thickness of leather used in a woman's purse, and bull's hide is similar in thickness to the sole of a shoe.

The prod produces low voltage, but virtually no amperage. The prod causes a mild shock but does not cause burns because amperes, not volts, cause burns. “Sometimes it is necessary to touch a animal with an electric stock prod to get it to go where you want it,” said Dr. Furman. “The prod is not a damaging stimulant, but rather an effective way to move the animals where they need to be in a timely fashion. Cattle prods are what I would call humane encouragement.”

According to Dr. Jeff Hall, a large animal veterinarian in Logan, Utah, “This type of prod does not harm the animals. It provides a mild electrical sensation that leaves no prolonged effects. In working with cattle for more than 30 years, I personally have been shocked with this type of device on several occasions. This type of shock was annoying but produced no lasting or harmful effects.”

Spurs

A variety of spurs are used in rodeo, each with a different purpose, but all are dulled to avoid any harm to the livestock. Timed event contestants often use spurs to cue their horse to speed up or turn. In saddle bronc and bareback riding, the spurs enhance the contestant's leg action while rolling over the horse's thick hide. Bull riders' spurs assist them in gripping the bulls, which have loose hides.

In the saddle bronc riding and bareback riding events, PRCA rules prohibit the use of sharpened spurs, locked rowels (the star-shaped wheel on spurs). Specifically, acceptable spurs have rowels that are blunt and are about one-eighth of an inch thick so they will not cut the animals.

The rowels must be loose so they will roll over the horse's hide. Bull riding spurs have loosely locked rowels to aid in gripping the loose-hided animals, but the rowels are still dull.

Two books Sisson's “Anatomy of the Domestic Animal” and Maximow and Bloom's “Textbook of Histology” — indicate that the hides of horses and bulls are much thicker than human skin. A person's skin is 1 mm to 2 mm thick. A horsehide is about 5 mm thick and bull hide is about 7 mm thick.

Stock Contractors

Horses and cattle are the No. 1 priority for rodeo's stock contractors. A good bucking horse can cost more than \$25,000, while some rodeo bulls sell for more than \$100,000.

Today's rodeo stock comes largely from "born to buck" breeding programs that take the genes of champion bucking horses and bulls and utilize them to breed the next generation of rodeo livestock.

Pierre, South Dakota PRCA Stock Contractor Jim Korkow comments, "You start with the breeding program, like my father did in the early 1950s with five mares he bought from the Tooke ranch. Three of their first five colts were stallions, one each out of Grey Eagle, Timberline and General Custer. Those bloodlines got us to where we are today, with some exceptional athletes." All PRCA stock contractors will agree, you simply can't make a horse or bull buck if they don't have the desire and skill to do so, it's in their blood.

PRCA stock contractor Skip Beeler explains the "making" of a bucking animal, "You can teach them to handle, load into the truck, stand in the chutes so they don't hurt themselves, but nobody can train a horse or bull to buck. They've got to have it in them! I'd say it's about 75 percent breeding, 10 percent luck, and 15 percent hard work to teach them the skills they need so you can handle them." A lot of hard work and dedication goes into breeding and caring for the valuable livestock that is a part of today's sport of rodeo.

Animals that
are not in top
condition and
receiving the
best of care
will not per-
form to the
top of their
ability.

— Doug Corey, DVM

PRCA PHOTO BY JOHNNA ESPINOSA



Specialized breeding programs produce today's bucking horses. These young bucking horses belong to Sankey Rodeo Company.



PRCA PHOTO BY MIKE COPENMAN



Nightjacket, a valuable bucking horse stallion was recently sold by Jim Zinser of J Bar J Rodeo Company, to Cullen Pickett for \$200,000. The horse had competed at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, ProRodeo's Super Bowl that showcases the sport's top stock and cowboys. Sixteen of Nightjacket's sons and daughters bucked at the 2010 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo!

"Today Rodeo is an investment," said veteran contractor Harry Vold of Harry Vold Rodeo Company in Avondale, Colorado. "It's most important to take care of these animals. In fact, we probably take better care of them than people not involved with rodeo."

The money, however, isn't the only reason these contractors take good care of their animals. "My reason for being in the business is not necessarily to make money. There are a lot of other things I could be doing," Sankey said., "but I enjoy being around these horses and bulls. That's why I'm in this business."

Many bucking horses live into their 20s, which is old for a performance horse. A strong relationship grows between many of the animals and the stock contractors and their families. "Each of the animals has its own personality, and we get to know them well," said Sankey. "When they retire, they live out their lives on one of my ranches. When they pass on, we bury them on my property." It's a misconception, however, to think rodeo animals can be treated like house pets. These are not cuddly, affectionate dogs and cats that come running at the sound of their names. They are tough ranch animals.

Veterinarians will tell you that animals belonging to professional rodeo stock contractors receive better care than many house pets or non-rodeo ranch stock.

"The rodeo animals I have been involved with are in as good condition as any horses I have worked on," said Dr. Doug Corey, a large animal veterinarian from Pendleton, Oregon.

"I have seen animal caretakers go hungry due to time spent feeding, watering, bedding and tending to the stock following performances," said Dr. Jennifer Schleining of Ames, Iowa. "Contractors invest hard-earned money, resources and time building a reputable business in providing quality rodeo stock. Healthy, well-cared-for animals are the center of the successful rodeo production. Quality animals draw good cowboys to the rodeo, which in turn draws the audience."

Professional Judges

Professional judges officiate every PRCA rodeo. Their responsibilities also include making sure the livestock are provided proper care and handling. Judges who are aware of mistreatment of livestock by any PRCA member at a PRCA-sanctioned event are required to report the violator to the PRCA Director of Rodeo Administration.

The PRCA rulebook allows for a variety of consequences if a member is found to be mistreating any of the livestock at a PRCA sanctioned rodeo or violating any of the 60 rules in place to provide for proper care and handling of the livestock. The consequences of violating PRCA livestock welfare rules ranges from fines to suspension and expulsion.

Not everyone can become a PRCA judge. PRCA members interested in becoming a judge undergo extensive training in the skills needed to evaluate livestock and to judge rodeo, as well as several other areas. To become approved, judges undergo testing of their knowledge of animal evaluations and the rodeo.

In addition, PRCA rodeo judges undergo continued training and evaluation to ensure their skills are sharp and that they are enforcing PRCA rules, especially those regarding the care and handling of rodeo livestock

“It’s a judge’s responsibility to make sure there’s a fair competition and the animals are a big part of that,” says Knowles. “Strong, healthy animals create a strong, healthy competition.” From inspecting the animals before each competition to working closely with the rodeo veterinarian, PRCA judges put the health and welfare of the livestock as a priority.

Mistreatment of animals at PRCA rodeos is virtually non-existent, according to the judges. Everyone involved in professional rodeo makes an effort to ensure that the animals are treated well.

“It’s a judge’s responsibility to make sure there’s a fair competition and the animals are a big part of that. Strong, healthy animals create a strong, healthy competition.”

— Steve Knowles, PRCA official



PRCA Commitment

PRCA PHOTO COURTESY OF MADE SANKER



PRCA PHOTO BY GINNY SCHONHOLTZ



All PRCA-sanctioned rodeos must have a veterinarian in attendance. Dr. Doug Corey evaluates a tie-down roping horse.

Animal welfare is a major and ongoing initiative of the PRCA. Not only does the association have rules to ensure the proper care and treatment of rodeo livestock, but is also has an Animal Welfare Committee to review all PRCA animal-related policies and issues.

The association also organizes educational seminars for veterinarians and rodeo industry members. All of PRCA's livestock welfare efforts are coordinated through the Industry Outreach Department including the internal and public educational programs.

The PRCA's Animal Welfare Committee meets regularly to discuss livestock issues, review rules and make recommendations regarding livestock welfare to the PRCA Board of Directors.

Veterinarians' opinions are a vital component of PRCA's animal welfare program. The PRCA relies on the American Association of the Equine Practitioners, the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Association of Bovine Practitioners to provide expertise. The PRCA Animal Welfare Committee is chaired by Doug Corey, DVM, the 2007 President of the American Association of Equine Practitioners and the membership of the committee includes two additional veterinarians with rodeo expertise.

Veterinarians play a big part in each PRCA sanctioned rodeo with the PRCA rules requiring a veterinarian on-site. This allows PRCA rodeo committees to work closely with local veterinarians on livestock welfare programs and for the PRCA to gather valuable information on rodeo livestock.

This is made possible through veterinarian-conducted livestock injury surveys that continually show a very low rate of injury, averaging through the years of surveys less than five-hundredths of one percent.

PRCA Rules

The PRCA has 60 rules to ensure the proper care and treatment of rodeo livestock included in its official rules and by-laws. While the rules and regulations are too numerous to list here, several of the safeguards for the proper treatment of animals in the rules and regulations are listed below. For a complete list of the rules and regulations dealing with the proper care and treatment of animals, please send

your request to PRCA Animal Welfare, PRCA, 101 Pro Rodeo Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80919 or email animalwelfare@prorodeo.com.

- A veterinarian must be on site at all PRCA-sanctioned rodeos.
- All animals are inspected and evaluated for illness, weight, eyesight and injury prior to the rodeo, and no animals that are sore, lame, sick or injured are allowed to participate in the event.
- Acceptable spurs must be dull.
- Standard electric prods may be used only when necessary and may only touch the animal on the hip or shoulder area.
- Neither stimulants nor hypnotics may be given to any animal to improve performance.
- Any PRCA member caught using unnecessary roughness or mistreating an animal may be immediately fined, suspended or expelled depending on the severity. This holds true whether it is in the competitive arena or elsewhere on the rodeo grounds.
- Weight limitations are set for calves (between 220 and 280 pounds) and steers (450-650 pounds).
- The flank straps for horses are fleece- or Neoprene-lined and those for bulls are made of soft cotton rope and may be lined with fleece or Neoprene.
- Steers used in team and steer roping have a protective covering placed around their horns.
- The use of prods and similar devices is prohibited in the riding events unless an animal is stalled in the chute.
- An optional no-jerk-down rule provides for fines if a contestant jerks a calf over backwards in tie-down roping.
- Rodeos must have a conveyance available to humanely transport any injured animal.
- Chutes must be constructed and maintained with the safety of the livestock in mind.



PRCA FILE PHOTO

Horn wraps are among the safety equipment required for rodeo livestock.

Frequently Asked Questions

PRCA PHOTO BY KIRI STEINKE



Livestock that participate in PRCA rodeos are provided excellent facilities and high quality feed to enable them to perform at their highest ability.

A lot of people have questions about the Sport of Rodeo and the livestock involved. As our society is urbanized, the general public is less familiar with large animals and rural life.

Q: *Does the livestock at PRCA rodeos get proper care?*

A: The PRCA and its members value their animals. Through its rules and actions, the PRCA is committed to making sure that rodeo is as safe as possible for the animals and the cowboys. On-site rodeo veterinarians agree that the animals are treated well.

Dr. Jennifer Schleining said, "Veterinarians have a vested interest in and a responsibility to ensure the humane treatment of animals. As such, I can confirm that the animal athletes involved in PRCA-sanctioned events are humanely handled and well cared for."

Q: *Are rodeo animals injured often?*

A: The injury rate in rodeo is extremely low, less than four hundredths of one percent (0.00037). The findings are based on a recent survey involving 75,472 animal exposures in 194 rodeo performances and 78 sections of slack resulting in 28 total injuries.

Q: *Are PRCA rules to protect the livestock enforced?*

A: Professional rodeo judges take their responsibility to report any violators of the PRCA rules seriously, and the PRCA administration and Board of Directors are equally conscientious about imposing and upholding fines. Although the PRCA is the largest and most respected Professional rodeo-sanctioning body in the world, its rules apply only to the nearly 700 rodeos sanctioned annually by the association.

Most other rodeo-sanctioning organizations abide by rules similar to the PRCA's. Unfortunately, unsanctioned works to share the rules and enforcement procedures with all other rodeo associations and events with the goal off all rodeos implements similar procedures. Formal relationships with the National High School Rodeo Association, National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association and National Little Britches Rodeo Association allow the PRCA to network with these associations regarding livestock issues.

PRCA PHOTO BY DR. DOUG COREY



PRCA rules require a means to transport injured livestock must be available. Some rodeos, like Pendleton, Oregon, have a specially equipped livestock ambulance.

Q: *What is the purpose of the flank strap in the bucking events and does it hurt the horses and bulls?*

A: Experts say professional rodeo's bucking animals enjoy what they do. Bucking animals are born, not made, and a flank strap cannot magically turn a placid animal into a championship buck. When placed on an animal naturally inclined to buck, the flank strap simply augments the bucking action, encouraging a bucking bronc or bull to kick high with its back feet.

Flank straps used on horses must be fleece- or Neoprene-lined. The flank strap used on a bull may be a soft 5/8-inch cotton rope. PRCA rules that govern flank straps do not allow any foreign or sharp objects. The flank strap is never pulled tight enough to cause injury or pain.

Placed around the equivalent of a human's abdominal area, the flank strap is a "signal" to the animal that it is time to buck and, when tightened, is likened to a snug belt. It does not touch the genitals. In fact, many top bucking horses are mares.

"The flank strap is never intended to cause any discomfort to the animal, nor have I ever seen any evidence of injury to a bucking animal caused by this strap," stated Dr. Ben Espy of San Antonio, Texas, who has cared for rodeo livestock.

Q: *Are the spurs safe for use on the livestock?*

A: Hides of horses and bulls are five to seven times thicker than human skin. The spurs allowed in PRCA-sanctioned rodeos have dull rowels, which is the wheel of the spur. Contestants who violate rules regarding spurs face fines, suspension and/or disqualification.

In both bareback riding and saddle bronc riding, the rowel must be loose and roll across the hide of an animal. This action generally only ruffles the animal's hair. An important fact to remember is that human skin is approximately 1-2 mm thick and horsehide is approximately 5 mm thick.

In bull riding, the spurs are loosely locked and are generally used to get traction on the bull's loose hide, which is approximately 7 mm thick.

Q: *Do rodeo participants and owners care for their animals?*

A: A common sentiment voiced by PRCA stock contractors is that their animals are almost like members of their family. The livestock represents more than their livelihood, and caring for animals is a way of life for these specialized ranchers.

Of course, rodeo is a business, but many stock contractors say they form relationships with their animals.



Flank straps used on bucking horses must be fleece- or Neoprene-lined.



Spurs used in roughstock events must be dull. Shown are the bareback (top) and bull riding spurs.

Q: *What happens to the livestock when they are not at a rodeo?*

A: The PRCA strives to ensure that its animals receive proper care and treatment before, during and after every rodeo performance.

Horses and cattle travel to rodeos in trucks that are specially designed for their protection. PRCA stock contractors unload their stock on long trips and allow them to eat, drink and rest in order for the livestock to be in top shape when they arrive at a rodeo. Horses and cattle are segregated during transportation and while at rodeos as needed to provide for their safety.

“ProRodeo animals are carefully sorted according to temperament for transport to and from rodeos to avoid injury,” said Dr. Eddie Taylor of Scottsdale, Arizona. “Upon arrival at a rodeo, the animals are placed in large holding pens, provided with fresh feed and water, and monitored frequently for any health concerns.”

Q: *Why do animal rights groups want to ban rodeo?*

A: Animal welfare is one of the most important initiatives for the PRCA. Animal welfare is very different from animal rights. Animal welfare is entirely about making sure that the livestock who are an integral part of our lives are provided proper care and handling. In contrast, animal rights extremists, don’t believe we have the right to interact with animals in sports such as rodeo.

Q: *What are cattle prods used for in rodeo?*

A: Cattle prods are used to aid in moving the livestock. PRCA rules govern the use of the prod during PRCA sanctioned events.



PRCA PHOTO BY SUSAN KANODE

Veterinarians attest that rodeo livestock are provided the finest care and treatment. These animals are an important and valuable part of professional rodeo.



Summary

The PRCA and its members are committed to promoting the proper care and treatment of the animals used in rodeo. As an association, the PRCA has been very proactive in establishing rules and regulations governing livestock welfare .

The PRCA prides itself on implementing the highest standards for treatment of rodeo livestock in the business, as well as encouraging other rodeo associations to adopt similar standards. The animals involved in PRCA-sanctioned events are afforded proper care and treatment through a comprehensive, award-winning animal welfare program and the enforcement of animal-related rules and regulations.

For more information, please send your request to the Animal Welfare at PRCA, 101 Pro Rodeo Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80919 or animalwelfare@prorodeo.com, or call 719-593-8840. Additional information on the PRCA and its animal welfare initiatives is available at www.prorodeo.com.



PROFESSIONAL RODEO COWBOYS ASSOCIATION

101 Pro Rodeo Dr.

Colorado Springs, CO 80919

(719) 593-8840

www.prorodeo.com