

## **PROPOSED RODEO ORDINANCE, Los Angeles**

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### **SUMMARY**

As worded, the practical implications of this ordinance, as written would be to eliminate rodeo entirely from the City of Los Angeles. In addition, the precedent, as well as extension of part of the ordinance to various equestrian disciplines, could be used to eliminate or impede the exercise of a variety of equestrian sporting events currently conducted in Los Angeles, including show jumping, dressage, and even movie productions.

In addition, while the LAEAC certainly appreciates and supports the desire to ensure that animals used in equestrian competitions such as rodeo, as well as other equestrian events, are treated humanely, and we agree conditions for those animals should be as safe as possible, the proposed ordinance is unnecessary for a sport that already has number regulations in place for animal protection, including those of the State of California, as well as those professional rodeo organizations themselves. The question appears to not be whether or not rodeo animals should be protected, rather, it appears to be whether the City of Los Angeles will allow rodeos at all.

Disturbingly, the ordinance itself contains many fallacies and false allegations. As such, the ordinance sets up numerous “straw men” in that it mandates prohibition of practices that are themselves already prohibited, or not done at all.

Critics of rodeo, as well as many activities that use animals (e.g., pony rides) often come from a point-of-view that any use of animals is inherently bad. As such, critics employ the “Nirvana Fallacy,” whereby they compare a current use of animals to a theoretical “perfect” (Nirvana). In fact, there are pluses and minuses to all endeavors and there is no “perfect.” The alternative to rodeo competition for rodeo animals is not an unencumbered, carefree life, rather, it is no life at all.

While it is certainly commendable and appropriate to try to ensure that rodeo is as safe as possible for the animals involved. It is impossible to make it completely risk free. However, when one considers all aspects of rodeo – economic benefits, cultural aspects, exposure to animals, and long-term care of the animals involved – the LAEAC strongly believes that the positive aspects of rodeo outweigh the negative.

If it is the desire of the City Council to simply eliminate the practice of rodeo from Los Angeles, a simply ordinance stating such would suffice. However, this ordinance does not do anything for animal welfare that has not already been done and it exposes not only rodeo, but all endeavors in which in Los Angeles horses are used, to potential threats based on the vague and inaccurate wording used. The LAEAC urges the City Council to reject this proposed ordinance.

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

*An ordinance amending Section 53.00 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to add a definition for a “rodeo” and adding LAMC Section 53.39.2 to prohibit the use of harmful practices, techniques, and devices at rodeos or rodeo-related events.*

If this is the purpose of the ordinance, it is unnecessary. Harmful practices, techniques, and devices are already prohibited both by regulations of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA), and specifically by the state of California 596.7.<sup>1</sup>

In its official rules and regulations, the PRCA has more than 60 rules to help ensure proper care and treatment of rodeo animals. These include:

- A veterinarian must be on-site
- All animals must be inspected and evaluated for illness, proper weight, eyesight, and injury prior to the event
- Spurs must be acceptable and dull
- Electric prods may be used only when bovine animals will not move and may only touch the animal in the hip or shoulder area
- Electric prods may only be used in horses if they will not come out of the chute
- Any PRCA member found to be using rough handling or abusing an animal is subject to immediate disqualification and a fine, whether in the arena or elsewhere on the rodeo grounds
- Weight limitations are set for calves and steers
- Flank straps for horses must be fleece- or neoprene-lined
- Flank straps for bulls must be made of soft cotton rope
- Steers used for roping must have a protective covering on their horns
- “No jerk-down” rules prohibit calves from being jerked over backwards in tie-down roping events
- All rodeos must have transports available to humanely move injured animals for treatment
- Chutes must be constructed with animal welfare in mind

A complete set of PRCA rules can be obtained by writing PRCA Animal Welfare Coordinator, PRCA, 101 Pro Rodeo Drive, Colorado Springs, CO, 80919.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=14.&part=1.&chapter=&article=#:~:text=596.7.,steer%20wrestling%2C%20or%20team%20roping.](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division=&title=14.&part=1.&chapter=&article=#:~:text=596.7.,steer%20wrestling%2C%20or%20team%20roping.)

*WHEREAS, rodeos often use a number of inhumane implements, including electric prods, flank straps, and spurs to encourage aggressive behavior in animals to produce an entertainment product and which inflict injury, pain, and suffering;*

This section is both objectionable and untrue. It is completely inappropriate for the ordinance to begin with a falsehood. Rodeos do not “often” use a number of inhumane implements. In fact, as previously noted, inhumane implements are prohibited in rodeo, both according to rodeo regulations, as well as by the state of California. Furthermore, even the use of devices that may cause brief discomfort are also strictly regulated in rodeo.

In addition, the behavior demonstrated by bucking horses and bulls is not “aggressive” (that is, the animals are not inclined to fight or attack), rather, they are doing what they are bred to do, that is, they are bred to try to get people who are attempting to ride them off their backs. Such animals are certainly uncooperative when humans attempt to ride them, however, they are not generally aggressive, and making them aggressive is not the intent of rodeo. In fact, most of the animals used in rodeo – calves, steers, and in some cases, sheep and goats, are not aggressive at all.

It is also not true that the equipment used in rodeo events routinely causes “injury, pain, and suffering.” In fact, a number of studies have looked at injuries to rodeo animals.

- In 1994, a survey of 28 sanctioned rodeos was conducted by on-site independent veterinarians. Reviewing animal runs, the injury rate was documented 0.047% (16 animals in 33,991 runs).<sup>2</sup>
- In 2000, a survey conducted by independent veterinarians at 57 PRCA rodeos found 0.053% (38 animal injuries in 71,743 animal exposures).<sup>3</sup>
- A 2001 survey reported an injury rate of 0.056% in 21 PRCA rodeos (15 animals in 26,584 performances).<sup>4</sup>
- A later PRCA survey of 60,971 animal performances at 198 rodeo performances and 73 sections of “slack” (competitions outside of the main competition events) indicated 27 animals were injured, i.e. 0.04%<sup>5</sup>
- In Australian rodeos, similar injury rates occur. Basic injuries occur at a rate of 0.072% (one in 1,405), with injuries requiring veterinary attention at 0.036% (one injury each 2,810 times an animal is used in competition).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sellnow, L. (January 1, 2002). [“Rodeo horses”](#). The Horse.

<sup>3</sup> Schonholtz, C. (January 16, 2012). [“Professional rodeo horses are bred to buck”](#). National Animal Interest Alliance.

<sup>4</sup> AVMA (January 15, 2001). [“Welfare of animals integral part of professional rodeos”](#). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. American Veterinary Medical Association. **218** (2001–01–15): 183, 185.

<sup>5</sup> Animal Welfare: The Care and Treatment of Professional Rodeo Livestock.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080411122325/http://www.prorodeo.com/pdfs/AnimalWelfare.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Welfare of animals integral part of professional rodeos. [“Animals in rodeo”](#). Australian Professional Rodeo Association.

- According to the Professional Bull Riding Association of Australia, a bull has a 0.004% chance of sustaining a life-threatening injury at a PBR event.<sup>7</sup>
- The animal injury rate in rodeo at Cheyenne Frontier Days, the largest rodeo in the United States, is extremely low, averaging less than two-tenths of one-percent. Most injuries are minor and life-threatening injuries are extremely rare.<sup>8</sup>

It would be disingenuous to assert that rodeo presents no risk at all of injury or stress to animals. It would also be disingenuous to assert that life itself poses no risk of injury or stress to animals. In the wild, animals are subjected to injury, starvation, and predation, and there is no care available to them. Injuries to and infirmities of feral horses have been documented repeatedly. But the reality of the life of a rodeo stock animal is far different than that which is portrayed by critics of rodeo.

To begin with, there is an economic reason for the care given to them. To be blunt, rodeo animals are extremely valuable. A young animal bucking bull DNA-verified parentage can be worth as much as \$100,000. A proven bucking bull can be worth as much as \$500,000.<sup>9</sup> A top-end bucking horse can be worth \$50,000 or more.<sup>10</sup> It makes no economic sense for rodeo stock contractors to subject their animals to situations that routinely present serious threats to the health of their valuable animals. Furthermore, as referenced previously, abundant research indicates that serious injuries to all species used in rodeo are rare. It is in no one's interest to hurt or harm rodeo animals.

Rodeo animals are well-cared for when they are not (briefly) being used in rodeos. For their part, riders and participants view horses and bulls as animals to be respected. In fact, abundant research shows that it is the riders, not the animals, who are at most risk for injury during competition.

## **STRESS TO ANIMALS USED IN RODEO**

What about stress? Research suggests that rodeo does cause some stress on animals who participate in rodeo events. However, that research shows that the stress is of short duration and likely decreases with time and experience as animals become habituated. In addition, they appear to rapidly recover from their short, stressful episodes.

## **CALF ROPING**

Stated concerns about calf roping include the possibility of physical injury, including broken bones, bleeding, and damage to the trachea, when calves are roped and thrown to the

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<sup>7</sup> PBR: Animal Welfare. [https://pbraustralia.com.au/media/1091/final-animal-welfare\\_17.pdf](https://pbraustralia.com.au/media/1091/final-animal-welfare_17.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Cheyenne Frontier Days: Animal Care. <https://www.cfdrodeo.com/about-us/for-the-media/animal-care/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.americanbuckingbull.com/about/faq/#:~:text=How%20much%20is%20a%20bucking,bull%20for%20several%20thousand%20apiece.>

<sup>10</sup> National Western Stock Show Cowboys Hope the Luck of the Draw Puts Them Aboard the Fiercest Bucking Horses, Denver Post, January 6, 2017.

ground. It has been shown that during competition, the calves are indeed stressed,<sup>11</sup> however, once the event is over, they are quickly seen to be calm, contented, exhausted, inquisitive and relieved.<sup>12</sup>

The rodeo industry is aware of the threat of injury and elevated levels of stress and takes efforts to treat the animals with dignity and humanely. Competition rules for calf-roping include disqualification and fines for ill-treating stock, severe jerking or throwing animals to the ground, and if the horse drags the calf. Approved roping devices, designed to work as a shock absorber and thus reduce the force of the rope around the animal's neck, are used. Calves must have minimum and maximum weights in order to further reduce the risk of injury.

## **BUCKING HORSES**

Young bucking horses may initially show signs of stress when introduced into rodeo competitions. However, in a recent study evaluating 116 horses over three years in the Bareback, Novice Bareback, Saddle Bronc, and Novice Saddle Bronc events, horses with increased experience with rodeo display fewer reactive behaviors during both loading and holding in the chute prior to performance, likely indicating that they become used to their situation and that it became less stressful.<sup>13</sup> At most, bucking horses might participate in rodeos 10 months out of a year, but they are only allowed to buck twice every seven days. Their work typically lasts around eight seconds, or 16 seconds a week.

## **BUCKING BULLS**

Similar to bucking horses, a bull may buck no more than one time per day, and typically bucks no more than two times during an event. Bulls competing in the Professional Bull Riding Association are fully mature, averaging 5 – 6 years of age. Bulls can live into their teens, and some bulls are still bucking past the age of 10. Once successful bucking bulls retire from competition, they become sires of the bucking bull breed.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sinclair, M, Keeley, T, Lefebvre, A-C, Phillips, CJC. Behavioral and Physiological Responses of Calves to Marshalling and Roping in a Simulated Rodeo Event *Animals (Basel)*. 2016; 6(5): 30.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4880847/>

12 Rizzuto, S, Evans, D, Wilson, B, McGreevy, P. . Exploring the Use of a Qualitative Behavioural Assessment Approach to Assess Emotional State of Calves in Rodeos *Animals (Basel)* . 2020 Jan 10;10(1):113  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7022810/#B5-animals-10-00113>

<sup>13</sup> Goldhawk, C, Grandin, T, Pajor, E. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* Volume 234, January 2021.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0168159120302872?via%3Dihub>

<sup>14</sup> Arlington Convention and Visitors Bureau. Ten Things You Didn't Know About the Bulls of PBR.  
<https://www.arlington.org/plan/blog/post/10-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-bulls-of-pbr/>

*WHEREAS, the City has a compelling interest in ensuring the safety and welfare of animals by restricting the use of harmful practices, techniques, and devices at rodeos; and*

Animal welfare activists who express concerns about the welfare of rodeo animals are not primarily concerned about the welfare of the animals involved in rodeo. They feel that rodeo is inhumane *per se*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, an effort short of banning rodeo is likely to be viewed as inadequate by those who oppose rodeo on humane grounds. As such, the proposed ordinance would likely do nothing to quiet those concerns.

The LAEAC completely agrees that the safety and welfare of animals used in rodeo performances should be a primary consideration. For those reasons, the state of CA has enacted California 596.7. Furthermore, event operators in top rodeos have strict rules of conduct that they are required to follow. The LAEAC completely agrees that such laws and standards should be followed.

However, the interests of the animals are not the only interest to consider when discussing rodeo. There are other compelling interests that must also be weighed when considering rodeo and other equestrian events.

## **CULTURAL INTERESTS**

The roots of today's rodeo culture reach way back to the cattle industry of the American West, where it was originally influenced by Spanish conquistadors in the 1700s. There, rodeo inherited many of its practices from Spanish ranchers and their Mexican ranch hands, known as vaqueros. The word "rodeo" itself is derived from the Spanish word "rodear" meaning "roundup," in reference to the roundup of cattle.<sup>16</sup>

Some claim that the first official rodeo was born in 1869 in Deer Trail, Colorado, when two groups of cowboys from neighboring ranches met to settle an argument over who was best at performing everyday cowboy tasks, including breaking wild horses, which is the precursor for today's saddle bronc riding event.

Since its inception, rodeo has been a fairly nondiscriminatory sport, and has included Hispanic, African American, Native American, and female contestants, even during eras when race and gender discrimination were commonplace.

Today's Professional Rodeo Cowboy's Association was formed in 1975, taking over from the Rodeo Cowboy's Association (RCA) which was formed in 1945.

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<sup>15</sup> Larson, PW. Rodeos: Inherent Cruelty to Animals, 2015. Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association. [https://www.hsvma.org/rodeos\\_inherent\\_cruelty\\_to\\_animals](https://www.hsvma.org/rodeos_inherent_cruelty_to_animals)

<sup>16</sup> A Brief History of Rodeo in the United States. <https://www.agdaily.com/livestock/brief-history-of-rodeo-in-the-united-states/>

This year marks the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bill Pickett<sup>17</sup> Rodeo in Los Angeles, an event to celebrate and honor Black Cowboys and Cowgirls and their contributions to building the American West.<sup>18</sup>

## EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS

Rodeo is a culture. Participants typically being as children, and learn values such as learning life skills, healthy competition, camaraderie, and helping others.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup> Rodeo teaches participants the value of hard work, humility (in victory and defeat), and friendship.<sup>22</sup> The PRCA supports educational camps, as well as allied organizations such as Tough Enough to Wear Pink,<sup>23</sup> a nationally-recognized campaign and framework for rodeos and western events which promotes breast cancer awareness, Miss Rodeo America,<sup>24</sup> where contestants compete in the areas of appearance, horsemanship, and personality, the American Quarter Horse Association,<sup>25</sup> the world's largest breed registry and membership organization, and the ProRodeo Hall of Fame.<sup>26</sup>

## ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Numerous reports detail the economic benefits of rodeo.

- In 2019, the Houston, Texas rodeo generated direct economic activity of \$243 million and total economic activity of \$391 million. The Rodeo generated a direct fiscal contribution of \$17 million and a total fiscal activity of \$20 million. The Rodeo supported a total of 3,694 direct jobs and 5,918 total jobs in Greater Houston.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2014, the direct *economic impact* of the California Rodeo Salinas and Professional Bull Riding events was estimated to be \$6,214,000.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bill Pickett. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill\\_Pickett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Pickett)

<sup>18</sup> Bill Pickett Rodeo. <https://www.billpickettrodeo.com/index.php/about>

<sup>19</sup> Barnes, KR. High School Rodeo Teaches Students Life Skills. KRCRTV. [https://krcrtv.com/archive/high-school-rodeo-teaches-students-life-skills\\_20160513211417988](https://krcrtv.com/archive/high-school-rodeo-teaches-students-life-skills_20160513211417988)

<sup>20</sup> Nelson, R. High School Rodeo: Good Kids with Good Attitudes. Farm and Ranch Guide. [https://www.agupdate.com/farmandranchguide/opinion/columnists/up\\_sims\\_creek/high-school-rodeo-good-kids-with-good-attitudes/article\\_dce6c358-ce75-11e9-958b-f3ba3fa1bf0f.html](https://www.agupdate.com/farmandranchguide/opinion/columnists/up_sims_creek/high-school-rodeo-good-kids-with-good-attitudes/article_dce6c358-ce75-11e9-958b-f3ba3fa1bf0f.html)

<sup>21</sup> Cantrell, T. How Rodeo Promotes Community. [https://cowboylifestylenetwork.com/how-rodeo-promotes-community/#:~:text=Local%20and%20national%20charities%20alike,unique%20platform%20to%20create%20chan](https://cowboylifestylenetwork.com/how-rodeo-promotes-community/#:~:text=Local%20and%20national%20charities%20alike,unique%20platform%20to%20create%20change.)

<sup>22</sup> Hassler, G. Learning Life Lessons Through Rodeo. Indiana Prairie Farmer. <https://www.farmprogress.com/commentary/learning-life-lessons-through-rodeo>

<sup>23</sup> Tough Enough to Wear Pink. <https://www.toughenoughtowearpink.com/>

<sup>24</sup> Miss Rodeo America. <https://www.missrodeoamerica.com/>

<sup>25</sup> American Quarter Horse Association. <https://www.aqha.com/>

<sup>26</sup> ProRodeo Hall of Fame. <https://www.prorodeohalloffame.com/>

<sup>27</sup> 2019 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ Economic Impact Study. <https://www.rodeohouston.com/Portals/0/Content/AboutUs/WhoWeAre/Economic%20Impact/2019-EconomicImpact-Summary.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> California Rodeo Salinas. Economic Impact Estimates For The Salinas Sports Complex. <https://www.carodeo.com/p/about-us/community/308>

- In 2020, the Fort Worth, Texas, Stock show and rodeo estimated, \$200 million total expenditures, and an addition of \$15 million in state and local taxes.<sup>29</sup>
- In 2012, the Grand National Rodeo in Daly, City, CA, generated approximately \$28,556,000 in spending activity, benefiting the local economy and creating a ripple effect of economic benefit for the state.<sup>30</sup>
- The economic impact of the Red Bluff Round-Up in Red Bluff, CA is estimated to be more than \$5 million annually.<sup>31</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

While it is inarguable that if there was no rodeo, rodeo animals would be free from any rodeo-caused injury (no matter how small the likelihood) or stress, and while everyone involved in rodeo agrees that the welfare of animals should be of primary importance, in formulating regulations, it is important to also consider alternatives.

There is precedent for rodeo regulation in California, and more specific and targeted regulations for rodeo have been formulated.<sup>32</sup> For example:

- Alameda County, California; Contra Costa County, California; Sedgwick County, Kansas; and Omaha, Nebraska all ban steer tailing or tripping.
- San Juan Capistrano, California requires stock contractors to provide a conveyance for humane removal of injured rodeo animals. San Juan Capistrano, California Code of Ordinances §6-1.09. Calf roping is further restricted in San Juan Capistrano by the weight of the calf. All neck ropes must be removed as soon as possible, and absolutely no ‘jerk downs’ are allowed. §6-1.20.
- Scotts Valley, California requires an animal control officer to be present and have access, similar to what other states require of veterinarians. Scotts Valley, California Code of Ordinances Sec. 6.16.170.
- Other cities completely ban rodeos on their grounds. Chino Hills, Irvine, Laguna Woods, and Pasadena, California all ban rodeos. If this is the intent of the City of Los Angeles, a simple ordinance would suffice.

However, it is simply a fallacy to suggest that banning rodeo would necessarily improve the welfare of animals. The “Nirvana Fallacy” compares a current situation to a theoretical “perfect” (Nirvana). However, even in a perfect world, animals suffer problems. For example, feral horses are allowed to roam in many parts of the western United States, and one might argue

<sup>29</sup> Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. Key Statistics/Economic Impact. <https://www.fwssr.com/p/plan-a-visit/who-we-are/key-statistics--economic-impact>

<sup>30</sup> CDFA. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CALIFORNIA GRAND NATIONAL RODEO, 2012. [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/fairs\\_&\\_expositions/Documents/Economic\\_Impact/Individual\\_Fair\\_Report\\_2012/1A\\_DA\\_A\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/fairs_&_expositions/Documents/Economic_Impact/Individual_Fair_Report_2012/1A_DA_A_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Red Bluff Round-Up. <https://www.redbluffroundup.com/>

<sup>32</sup> Steffey, M. Detailed Discussion of Rodeos. Michigan State University Animal and Legal Historical Center, 2018. <https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-rodeos>



that this “natural” state is to their benefit. However, due to unchecked populations of horses, food sources may be scarce, horses starve and die from dehydration, and suffer various health problems.<sup>33, 34</sup> Furthermore, if animals are not used for rodeo activities, it is not likely that they will be moved to alternative careers. Instead, these animals would mostly likely be destroyed.

If the City of Los Angeles feels compelled to add its own regulations rodeo, there are ample precedents, with specific prohibited practices, that avoid inflammatory verbiage such as “inhumane” that could be implemented. However, given currently existing regulations, these would seem to be redundant and duplicative of existing regulations.

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<sup>33</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association. Frequently Asked Questions About the Overpopulation of Wild Horses and Burros on Federal Lands. <https://www.avma.org/wild-horses-burros-faq>

<sup>34</sup> BLM Prepares for Emergency Action to Save Drought-Stricken Horses and Burros on Public Lands. August, 2021. <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/blm-prepares-emergency-action-save-drought-stricken-wild-horses-and-burros-public>

*WHEREAS, the Los Angeles Municipal Code does not currently define a rodeo or rodeo-related event. NOW, THEREFORE, THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS: Section 1. The following definition is added to Section 53.00 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code in proper alphabetical order to read as follows: Rodeo" shall mean an exhibition, performance, or competition that includes any of the following: bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping, tie-down roping, barrel racing, chuck wagon races, or other similar event or activity.*

It seems superfluous and unwise to attempt to add a definition of the term "rodeo" when the term "rodeo" has already been repeatedly defined. For example, Merriam-Webster defined "rodeo as, "a public performance featuring bronco riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, and Brahma bull riding."<sup>35</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines rodeo as, "in North America, a sport and public entertainment in which cowboys show different skills by riding wild horses and catching cows with ropes."<sup>36</sup> The Collins English Dictionary defines rodeo as, "A rodeo is a public entertainment event in which cowboys show different skills, including riding wild horses and catching cattle with ropes."<sup>37</sup> All of these definitions note the use of horses and cattle for public entertainment. However, they do not describe, "other similar events or activities." Finally, CA code 596.7. (a) (1) defines rodeo as such: "For purposes of this section, "rodeo" means a performance featuring competition between persons that includes three or more of the following events: bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, or team roping." There would seem to be little reason for Los Angeles to come up with its own definition of the term.

In addition, the definition is incomplete. Would the ordinance ban removing of ribbons tied to the tails of goats by young children (goat tail tying)? What about "mutton busting," where young children attempt to stay on the backs of sheep? Would wild cow milking be prohibited? Is barrel racing, where riders race horses around three barrels (typically while wearing spurs) acceptable? Is pole bending, a timed event that features a horse and one mounted rider, running a weaving or serpentine path around six poles arranged in a line, be allowed? Would gymkanas, typically day-long competitions held at local venues comprising races and other events between horseback riders be covered? Would local team roping events held at private facilities be covered?

In addition, including "other similar events or activities" is overly broad and could be read to include any public event where horses are used. So, for example, in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, and, presumably the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, international show jumping riders will be riding horses at a public event. Many of them will be wearing spurs. Broadly interpreted as a "similar event," this ordinance could be applied to any endeavor in which horses or other livestock are used for entertainment.

*Sec. 2. Section 53.39.2 is added to the Los Angeles Municipal Code to read as follows:*

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rodeo>

<sup>36</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/rodeo>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/rodeo>

*SEC. 53.39.2. RODEOS. PROHIBITED PRACTICES, TECHNIQUES, AND DEVICES. It shall be unlawful for any person to conduct, operate, or participate in a Rodeo at which any animal is induced or encouraged to perform through the use of any practice or technique, or any chemical, mechanical, electrical, manual device, or other similar device or implement, that will cause, or is likely to cause, physical injury, torment, or suffering. Prohibited devices include, but are not limited to, electric prods or shocking devices, flank or bucking straps, wire tie-downs, sharpened or fixed spurs rowels, and lariats or lassos. Pursuant to Penal Code Section 596.7(e), however, in the limited circumstance when necessary to protect a participant or spectator, an electric prod or similar device may be employed, but only from the time the animal enters the performance holding chute until the conclusion of the performance, competition (a) or or 1 exhibition of the animal, which is the time period when the animal's potential for dangerous human interaction is most likely.*

The verbiage in this section is so broad, so vague, and so ill-considered that if it were to be implemented, it would essentially end rodeo in Los Angeles, and it would also have wide-ranging implications for the use of horses and other animals in other equestrian-related events. In fact, it would ban equipment that is used for human and animal safety. Insofar as specifically mentioned devices:

#### **“ELECTRIC PRODS OR SHOCKING DEVICES”**

Electric prods are only used when the safety of the animal, contestant, or handler is of concern, and then only when moving the animals. They are never used to prod an animal in competition.

Cattle can be difficult to move and direct for a variety of reasons. Prods can be useful for moving stubborn or aggressive animals. Often cattle will not move forward when they are fearful of something they see, hear, or smell. Removal of these distractions or hiding them, such as with solid wall partitions, can greatly reduce animal handling problems, however, cattle handlers cannot completely overcome the animal's decision not to move forward, especially during an event, when distractions may be frequent and unpredictable.

While a cattle prod does produce an uncomfortable shock from which animals move away. Most cattle prods will have a voltage of no more than 9 volts and 20 milliamps.<sup>38</sup> This as opposed to a Taser, which is capable of producing 50,000 volts of electricity. A cattle prod only causes a shock, however, it does not significantly affect the muscles and nervous system of the body. The lower voltage in a cattle prod only shocks at the point of contact. The voltage in a stun gun is high enough to dump electricity into the entire body, cause muscle contraction, and temporary nervous system disruption. The two devices are similar in neither use nor intent.

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<sup>38</sup> How Many Volts in a Cattle Prod. Ask for Idea, Oct. 27, 2021. <https://www.askforidea.com/how-many-volts-in-a-cattle-prod-here-is-the-answer/>

Lastly, the use of electric prods at rodeo events is already covered by California Code Use of electric prods in any California rodeo is used in compliance with existing CA Code 596.7: “The rodeo management shall ensure that no electric prod or similar device is used on any animal once the animal is in the holding chute, unless necessary to protect the participants and spectators of the rodeo.”

### **“FLANK OR BUCKING STRAPS”**

Flank straps, or bucking straps, are sheepskin- or neoprene-lined padded straps that are placed around the flanks of bucking horses and bulls. Rodeo rules strictly regulate the use of such straps.

- Sharp or cutting objects are never placed in the strap
- Straps are never laced with spikes or irritants
- Straps are never placed on the animal’s genitals

Flank straps are used to encourage and/or enhance the bucking action of animals that are already inclined to buck. They are not intended to harm, injure, or inflict pain on animals. Indeed, as riders are attempting to obtain the highest score possible when riding, injuring or causing pain to the animals would be counterproductive. Animals that are not already inclined to do so cannot be made to buck by use of a flank strap.

### **“WIRE TIE-DOWNS”**

A tie-down is a piece of equipment that consists of a strap running from the girth strap to a noseband. This strap gives the horse something to balance on when moving at high rates of speed and changing direction. Tie-downs are typically made of leather, cotton, wax string or rope, it serves as a balance point for the horse to keep its head down as it is running. When made of wire, tie-downs must have a covering to protect the animal.

### **SPURS**

A spur is a metal tool designed to be worn in pairs on the heels of riding boots. Spurs may have revolving discs (“rowels”) or they may be “fixed” in position.

Sharpened spurs are not allowed in any riding discipline, including rodeo. Sharpened spurs have the potential to injure the animal being ridden and they are strictly prohibited.

Most spurs are fixed. In equestrian disciplines, spurs have a variety of purposes. For example, in show jumping or dressage (both of which are Olympic events), spurs are used for the purpose of directing a horse to move forward or laterally while being ridden.

In rodeo, the rider is required to spur in a rhythmic fashion, touching the horse or bull at every stride or jump, in the manner of old-time cowboys. Spur designs and use is strictly regulated; spurs must be dull and rowels (if used) must turn freely. The spurs encourage

animals to buck; they are not intended to cause pain. The use of spurs helps contestants with balance and grip, and helps them keep time with the animals.

Most equestrian organizations, including rodeo, have rules in about spur design and use. There are stiff penalties for using spurs in any manner that constitutes animal.

Riders in all equestrian sports may elect to use spurs. Such events include not only rodeo events, but also Gymkhana (a day event comprising races and other competitions between horse riders), and Olympic sports such as Eventing, Dressage, and Show Jumping. Riders of horses in movies routinely wear spurs.

As written, *“sharpened or fixed spurs rowels”* is incomprehensible. Is the intent of the ordinance to ban roweled spurs? Fixed spurs? Sharpened spurs? All spurs? If they were to be banned in rodeo, would they also be banned in other equestrian sports?

### **“LARIATS OR LASSOS”**

Lariats or lassos are long, coiled ropes that are thrown out from the horse for the purpose of catching something. In rodeo, they are generally used for roping calves or steers, but they may also be used in events such as the “Rawhide Race,” whereby a rider, carrying a blanket or hide attached to the saddle by a rope, races to one end of the arena, at which point the rider’s partner gets on the hide and gets pulled to the other end of the arena.

Events such as calf-roping, team roping, or “tie-down roping” would be impossible without the use of a lariat or lasso. By prohibiting them, as proposed in this ordinance, it would be impossible to conduct these events.

*(b) Any person conducting or operating a Rodeo shall comply with the requirements of California Penal Code Section 596.7(b) through (e) relating to the presence of a licensed veterinarian, availability of a conveyance for injured animals, and use of an electric prod or similar device to protect the participants or spectators of a Rodeo.*

While the LAEAC completely agrees with this section of the proposed ordinance, it seems unnecessary for the City of LA to confirm or implement an ordinance that is already covered by existing California Law and covered by the regulations of rodeo associations.

*(c) No person shall conduct or operate a Rodeo without first obtaining a permit from the Department as required by Section 53.50.*

As per the previous section, if a permit already required by existing ordinance, why does it need to be mentioned in this ordinance?

*(d) If any subsection, subdivision, clause, sentence, phrase, or portion of this section is held unconstitutional or invalid or unenforceable by any court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction, the remaining subsections, subdivisions, clauses, sentences, phrases, or portions of this section shall remain in full force and effect, and to this end the provisions of this Section are severable.*

*Sec. 3. The City Clerk shall certify to the passage of this ordinance and have it published in accordance with Council policy, either in a daily newspaper circulated in the City of Los Angeles or by posting for ten days in three public places in the City of Los Angeles: one copy on the bulletin board located at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall; one copy on the bulletin board located at the Main Street entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall East; and one copy on the bulletin board located at the Temple Street entrance to the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.*

*Approved as to Form and Legality*

*MICHAEL N. FEUER, City Attorney By STEVE R. HOUCHIN Deputy City Attorney*

*Date 12/17/21*

*File No. 20-1575*

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*The Clerk of the City of Los Angeles hereby certifies that the foregoing ordinance was passed by the Council of the City of Los Angeles.*

*This language is pro forma and needs no comment.*



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The LAEAC opposed implementation of this ordinance as written. The proposed ordinance is duplicative of existing California law. It is based on numerous demonstrable fallacies. It would not result in an improvement in animal welfare and its terms could be extended to other equestrian endeavors where some of the listed devices may be employed.

Animal rights activists have done important work by drawing attention to animal abuse. Such attention has ensured that standards have been created, that they are monitored, and that unscrupulous or inhumane practices are not tolerated. However, to outlaw rodeo animals from performing tasks that they are both bred for and physically adapted to perform robs them of the purpose for their being. If these animals are not used in rodeo, they will not be retired to an idyllic life, rather, they will be disposed of.

If the City Council feels an ordinance is necessary concerning rodeos, a simple proscriptive ordinance, such as, "All rodeos held in the City of Los Angeles must be licensed and held in accordance with California regulations and PRCA rules" would appear to be sufficient to address most welfare concerns. If there are specific concerns, they should be specifically addressed, and the LAEAC would be happy to provide its expertise in assisting with such efforts. If, however, the assertion is that rodeo is inhumane per se, and that it should be banned, rather than try to regulate rodeo out of existence, the City Council should simply state that it would like to see rodeo banned. However, such an assertion would be a matter of opinion, and not based on fact.

