

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

**EQUINE WELFARE IN COMPETITIVE EVENTS
OTHER THAN RACING**

**Report by the Senate Select Committee
on Animal Welfare**

August 1991

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Appointment of the Committee

The Committee was established on 17 November 1983 and reappointed on 22 February 1985, 22 September 1987 and 9 May 1990.

Members

Senator Bryant Burns, Queensland, *Chairman* (from May 1990)

Senator David Brownhill, New South Wales, *Deputy Chairman* (from July 1985)

Senator Robert Bell, Tasmania (from May 1990)

Senator Paul Calvert, Tasmania (from September 1987)

Senator Barney Cooney, Victoria (from July 1985)

Senator Nick Sherry, Tasmania (from August 1990)

A list of former members of the Committee appears at Appendix 1 to this report.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABCRA	Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association
AERA	Australian Endurance Riders Association
AEVA	Australian Equine Veterinary Association
AFWA	Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals
ANZFAS	Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies
APRA	Australian Professional Rodeo Association
CRI	Cardiac Recovery Index
EFA	Equestrian Federation of Australia
NSW AWAC	New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council
RNCAS	Royal National Capital Agricultural Society
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 1: RODEOS IN AUSTRALIA

Campdrafting

On the basis of evidence presented during the inquiry, the Committee is satisfied that there are no major animal welfare problems associated with campdrafting. (paragraph 1.9)

Incidence of Injuries

The Committee welcomes recent initiatives in Victoria requiring reports on serious injuries to rodeo animals to be lodged with the State Bureau of Animal Welfare.

The Committee, however, is concerned about the lack of data on the nature and extent of injuries sustained at rodeos in other States and Territories. In the Committee's view, statistics should be collected so that injuries to these animals can be monitored and assessed. (paragraphs 1.31 and 1.32)

Recommendation 1: that State and Territory Governments, in consultation with rodeo associations, develop procedures in order to collect statistics and information on major injuries and fatalities of animals during rodeo events. (paragraph 1.33)

Views on Rodeos

The Committee considers that the nature of rodeos demands that the welfare of animals be given paramount importance by all those involved in the sport. The Committee is aware that recent improvements to protect the welfare of animals have been made by Rodeo Associations.

On the basis of evidence presented during the inquiry, the Committee is of the view that rodeos need not be banned or phased out, providing significant improvements in their conduct are introduced.

It is the Committee's view that when implemented, these improvements will make rodeos more acceptable to the general community and will also

alleviate many of the concerns held by animal welfare organisations. Most importantly, these improvements will safeguard the welfare of animals used in rodeos. (paragraphs 1.58 to 1.60)

CHAPTER 2: IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE AT RODEOS

State Regulations Applying to Rodeos

The Committee welcomes the development of regulatory frameworks to control rodeos and the welfare of animals used in these events. The Committee notes that since their introduction, the Code of Practice in New South Wales and the permit system in Victoria have played an important role in improving the welfare of animals at rodeos in those States. (paragraph 2.17)

Recommendation 2: that all State and Territory Governments develop appropriate regulatory frameworks for the welfare of animals used in rodeos. In particular, these controls should cover training sessions and rodeo schools as well as exhibitions, spectacles or displays for gain. The Committee also considers that appropriate enforcement and penalty provisions should be included in the regulations. (paragraph 2.18)

National Approach

The Committee considers that it would be beneficial if a National Code of Practice on Rodeos could be developed. (paragraph 2.21)

Use of Contract Stock

The Committee is in no doubt that it is essential that contract stock be used in rodeo events. This view is supported by overwhelming evidence presented during the inquiry. (paragraph 2.40)

Recommendation 3: that all State and Territory Governments introduce regulations requiring that all stock used in rodeos be supplied by a contractor approved by the major Rodeo Associations. (paragraph 2.40)

Veterinary Supervision

Ideally, a veterinarian should be present at all rodeos. The Committee accepts, however, that at some venues, particularly in remote areas, this

may not always be feasible. In these limited cases, the Committee considers that a veterinarian should at least be on call to attend the rodeo. (paragraph 2.49)

Supervision of Rodeos

The Committee concludes that lines of responsibility on matters relating to animal welfare at rodeos must be clear and distinct. In particular, the Committee considers that a final arbiter on animal welfare issues must be appointed for all rodeos.

The Committee also considers that the self-regulation of rodeos would be enhanced if governing bodies of the Rodeo Associations appoint officers responsible for animal welfare matters. (paragraphs 2.58 and 2.59)

CHAPTER 3: CONCERNS ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF RODEOS

Training and Handling of Horses

The Committee is satisfied that the three major Rodeo Associations recognise the importance of the training and proper preparation of stock particularly horses, for rodeo events. Nevertheless, the Committee affirms its view that the regulation and control of rodeos should extend to training and practice sessions and rodeo schools.

The Committee condemns any cruel or inhumane practices that may be used to train or prepare horses for rodeo events. In particular, the Committee is of the view that the use of goads and other similar instruments should not be used in the training or handling of rodeo stock. The Committee understands that the Rodeo Associations share these views and calls on them to impose the strongest possible sanctions against any member who trains, prepares or handles stock in a cruel or inhumane manner.

Given the need to safeguard the welfare of animals in rodeo events, the Committee calls on the Rodeo Associations to develop training and education programs that emphasise a humane approach to rodeo activities. The Committee considers that proper training of competitors will result in greater attention being given to the welfare of animals used in rodeo events. (paragraphs 3.12 to 3.14)

Use of Flank Straps

On the basis of evidence presented during the inquiry, the Committee's view is that flank straps are an irritant to bucking horses and bulls. (paragraph 3.32)

Use of Electric Prods

The Committee is concerned about excessive and unauthorised use of electric prods on rodeo stock while in the chute.

In keeping with the New South Wales regulations on this matter, the Committee considers that the prod should be used as little as possible. In particular, the Committee considers that electric prods must not be applied to sensitive parts of the animal's anatomy.

The Committee also holds the view that an electric prod should only be used by authorised and responsible persons. (paragraphs 3.42 to 3.44)

Recommendation 4: that all State and Territory Governments develop appropriate regulations for the use of electric prods on horses and bulls in rodeos. In particular, the Committee considers that these arrangements should include specific limitations on the strength of the current in electric prods and clear instructions on the appropriate use of such prods. (paragraph 3.45)

Use of Spurs

The Committee welcomes the regulations in New South Wales and Victoria on the type of spurs used in rodeo events. The Committee, however, is of the view that the Rodeo Associations must police these rules more stringently. In particular, the Committee considers that regular inspections of spurs should be conducted prior to events to ensure that only authorised spurs are used. The Committee expects that any injuries resulting from spurs will be included in reports recommended in paragraph 1.33. These injuries should be monitored and, if necessary, further restrictions should be introduced.

As proper spurring action can reduce injuries to rodeo animals, the Committee considers that the Rodeo Associations should give priority to

the improvement of training of riders in this aspect of the sport. (paragraphs 3.59 and 3.60)

Reservations: Senators Burns and Bell wish to record their view that spurs should not be used in rodeo events. The Senators consider that spurs are cruel and inflict pain on animals. In particular, the use of spurs on the shoulders of a horse to make it "buck better" is unacceptable. (paragraph 3.61)

Transport

The Committee considers the need to safeguard the welfare of animals being transported to and from rodeos must be acknowledged. In the Committee's view, the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Road Transport of Livestock should serve as a minimum set of standards for stock contractors. The Committee hopes that, where appropriate, the Rodeo Associations will develop more specific standards to be applied by its members who transport rodeo stock.

The Committee affirms the commonsense approach that only fit, compatible stock be transported, that the vehicles used should be soundly constructed and free of design features likely to cause injury, that there be adequate rest periods over long journeys and that only responsible drivers, knowledgeable in the handling of rodeo stock should be employed. (paragraphs 3.68 and 3.69)

Arena Surfaces

The Committee welcomes the initiatives of Rodeo Associations to ensure that the surfaces of arenas used for rodeos do not pose risks to the welfare of animals. In particular, the Committee encourages the development of the rodeo advisory program, including information on arena surfaces. (paragraph 3.81)

Horses Used in Events other than Bucking

On the basis of the evidence received, the Committee considers that there are no serious animal welfare implications for horses used in calf roping and steer wrestling events. The Committee does, however, consider that barrel racing may pose an animal welfare problem. (paragraph 3.84)

Calf Roping

The Committee is of the view that there are serious implications for the welfare of calves used in roping events at rodeos. The Committee cannot ignore the fact that Victoria, one of the three States with regulatory arrangements for rodeos, has put in place strict conditions for calf roping. Additionally, the Committee finds it significant that animal welfare organisations, including those that support other rodeo events, have serious reservations about calf roping.

Although roping devices may reduce abrupt stopping and jerking down of calves, the Committee is not convinced that these devices eliminate problems associated with roping of calves.

The Committee is also concerned that weight limitations prescribed in the New South Wales Code of Practice and the Rules of the Australian Professional Rodeo Association are too light. Yet, the Committee finds the evidence on the possible benefits of slightly heavier weight limitations inconsistent and in some cases conflicting. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that the conditions applying to calf roping in Victoria go a long way to safeguard the welfare of the animals. The Committee expects that any injuries and/or fatalities resulting from calf roping will be included in reports recommended in paragraph 1.33. These injuries and fatalities should be monitored and, if necessary, further restrictions should be introduced. (paragraphs 3.104 to 3.106)

Recommendation 5: that State and Territory Governments introduce weight limitations, similar to those that apply in Victoria to animals used in rodeos and, in particular, calves. (paragraph 3.107)

Reservations: Senators Burns and Bell accept that the Committee's conclusion on calf roping will improve the welfare of animals in these events. Nevertheless, the Senators consider that calf roping should be banned from rodeo events as weight limitations or improved roping devices do not overcome the inherent animal welfare problems associated with this event. (paragraph 3.108)

CHAPTER 4: EQUINE WELFARE - EVENTING

Veterinary Supervision

The Committee considers that an official veterinarian should be in attendance during the cross-country and showjumping phases of eventing, and in particular, when these are conducted as part of Three Day Events. Furthermore, the Committee supports the introduction of rules that provide for more direct control and supervision of the welfare of horses in eventing by veterinarians. (paragraph 4.26)

Course Design

The Committee is of the view that courses, whether for advanced level competition or novice events, should be designed to safeguard the welfare of horses. While courses should be designed to test the skills of horse and rider, the Committee considers that they should not place unfair or unreasonable demands on the horse.

To achieve this objective, the Committee encourages the Equestrian Federation of Australia to ensure that all courses are designed by experienced personnel. The Federation should also promote seminars and disseminate information on appropriate course designs. (paragraphs 4.33 and 4.34)

Drugs and Drug Detection

The Committee endorses the view of the Equestrian Federation of Australia that performance enhancing and painkilling drugs have no place in equine events. The Committee considers that every effort should be made to eliminate the use of these drugs. To this end, the Committee encourages the Equestrian Federation of Australia to increase the number and overall coverage of random drug testing. The Committee considers that current penalties for using prohibited substances are not a sufficient deterrent and calls on the Equestrian Federation of Australia to reconsider the appropriateness of these sanctions. (paragraph 4.49)

Rider Education

The Committee considers that the welfare of horses participating in events will be improved greatly if riders are properly trained and educated in the care and handling of horses. The Committee encourages the Equestrian Federation of Australia to promote programs designed to increase rider education. These programs should emphasise the need for horses to be properly prepared and conditioned for participation in equine events. (paragraph 4.52)

CHAPTER 5: EQUINE WELFARE - ENDURANCE RIDING

Fatalities

The Committee considers that the number of horse fatalities resulting from endurance riding is unacceptable. The Committee's concerns are heightened by the fact that proponents of the sport emphasise the nature and extent of veterinary supervision in these events.

In the Committee's view, the Australian Endurance Riders Association, as a matter of urgency, must introduce procedures, including more stringent veterinary controls, to safeguard the welfare of horses in endurance riding. The Committee recognises that endurance riding is becoming more popular and therefore an increasing number of riders and horses are participating in the sport. The Committee therefore, is adamant that further controls are necessary to avoid the increasing number of fatalities. (paragraphs 5.16 and 5.17)

Novice and Unfit Horses

The Committee is of the view that only suitable, properly trained and fit horses should compete in endurance rides. In particular, the Committee considers that the Australian Endurance Riders Association, and its affiliates, must introduce measures to protect the welfare of horses new to the sport. These measures could include the establishment of categories of competition based on the novice horse rather than the novice rider. Novice horses should be required to demonstrate a capacity consistent with endurance riding before being allowed to compete in more advanced categories of competition. (paragraph 5.27)

Training Rides

The Committee recognises that training rides provide a useful means of educating new riders and horses into endurance riding.

It is, therefore, appropriate that these rides are conducted under strict supervision and control and that veterinary standards should be more stringent than in competitive rides.

The Committee calls on the Australian Endurance Riders Association to review the rules relating to training rides and, in particular, veterinary standards, in order to ensure that the welfare of horses involved in these events is not compromised. (paragraphs 5.32 to 5.34)

Rider Education

The Committee considers that riders should have a thorough knowledge of all aspects of endurance riding and, in particular, a keen appreciation of the physical demands the event places on horses.

The Committee is of the view that injuries and fatalities will be reduced if riders are knowledgeable and skilful. The Committee, therefore, encourages the Australian Endurance Riders Association to give priority to programs that promote the education of riders in endurance events. The Committee also encourages the Association to consider the practical suggestions on rider education noted in this report. (paragraph 5.39 and 5.40)

Cardiac Recovery Index

The Committee notes that the Cardiac Recovery Index is used at international endurance riding competitions and extensively in North America. The Committee considers that the Australian Endurance Riders Association should investigate the feasibility of introducing this test into veterinary procedures at endurance rides conducted in Australia. (paragraph 5.46)

Veterinary Supervision

The Committee acknowledges that the arrangements for veterinary control of endurance rides recognise the need to safeguard the welfare of the horse.

The Committee endorses the view that the rules on veterinary supervision and control must be enforced strictly. The Committee considers that wherever possible events should be supervised by veterinarians familiar with endurance rides. (paragraphs 5.56 and 5.57)

Statistics on Fatalities

The Committee considers that the Australian Endurance Riders Association, and its State affiliates should collect and maintain a register of statistics on fatalities and major injuries to horses involved in endurance rides. (paragraph 5.59)

Recommendation 6: that all State and Territory Governments require statistics on fatalities and major injuries to be lodged annually with the relevant Department responsible for animal welfare. This will enable the responsible authority to monitor the welfare of animals involved in this sport. (paragraph 5.60)

CHAPTER 6: EQUINE WELFARE - SHOW EVENTS

Drug Use

The Committee considers that all horses at equine events at shows should compete free of prohibited drugs. The Committee understands that only a small number of drug tests are undertaken at present compared with the number of horses competing. The Committee encourages show societies to increase their random testing for drugs at these events. The Committee also considers that where a show society bans a competitor for prohibited drug use that ban should be applied by other shows. (paragraph 6.19)

Rapping and other Practices

The Committee considers that rapping and other such practices are unacceptable. The Committee holds the strong view that the Equestrian Federation of Australia should make every effort to eliminate these practices from competition and training. (paragraph 6.32)

PREFACE

Terms of Reference

In November 1983, the Senate established a Select Committee to inquire into and report upon the following matter:

the question of animal welfare in Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) interstate and overseas commerce in animals;
- (b) wildlife protection and harvesting;
- (c) animal experimentation;
- (d) codes of practice of animal husbandry for all species; and
- (e) the use of animals in sport.

To date, the Committee has presented eight reports to the Senate. These are:

Export of Live Sheep from Australia	1985
Dolphins and Whales in Captivity	1985
Kangaroos	1988
Animal Experimentation	1989
Sheep Husbandry	1989
Intensive Livestock Production	1990
Racing Industry (Interim Report)	1990
Culling of Large Feral Animals in the Northern Territory	1991

On 31 May 1990, the Senate resolved that the Committee inquire into and report upon the implications for equine welfare in competitive events other than racing. The Senate also resolved that the Committee should present its report on or before the last sitting day in the Autumn sittings in 1991. On 20 June 1991, the Senate resolved to extend the time for the presentation of this report to 30 August 1991.

Conduct of the Inquiry

Following the referral of the inquiry to the Committee, advertisements calling for submissions were placed in major national and metropolitan newspapers.

The Committee received 26 submissions. A list of individuals and organisations that made specific submissions on the implications for equine welfare in competitive events other than racing appear at Appendix 2. The Committee also considered relevant sections of the 593 general submissions lodged with the Committee since 1983.

The Committee held ten public hearings. These were as follows:

Sydney:	30 November 1990
Canberra:	10 December 1990
Melbourne:	14 December 1990
Canberra:	11 March 1991
Sydney:	27 March 1991
Sydney:	28 March 1991
Adelaide:	23 April 1991
Brisbane:	20 May 1991
Brisbane:	21 May 1991
Canberra:	17 June 1991

The witnesses who appeared before the Committee are listed in Appendix 3.

During the course of the inquiry, members of the Committee attended the National Rodeo Championships at Tamworth in February 1991 and various equine events, including rodeo and campdraft competitions, at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney in March 1991. The Committee also inspected the drug testing operations and stabling facilities at the Royal

Easter Show. In addition, the Committee inspected a stock contractor's property in Wagga Wagga to observe the training of rodeo stock.

Approach to the Report

The Committee's report on Equine Welfare is divided into the following four Parts:

- Rodeos;
- Eventing;
- Endurance Riding; and
- Show Events.

This approach reflects the evidence received on the reference.

In Part 1, the Committee reports on the welfare of horses used in rodeos. During the inquiry, the Committee was also referred to rodeo events in which animals other than horses are involved.

The Committee considers that it would be remiss not to address the welfare of animals involved in these events, especially as they are an integral part of rodeos. Accordingly, Part 1 of the Committee's report also addresses issues relating to the use of other animals, including bulls and calves, in rodeo events.

Acknowledgments

The Committee expresses its appreciation to those who made written submissions to the inquiry and who co-operated with the Committee by giving public evidence. Those who made submissions but did not appear before the Committee may be assured that their submissions have been taken into account in the writing of this report.

The Committee is grateful for the assistance of those who arranged inspections. In particular, the Committee wishes to thank Mr Colin Sanders, Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales, Miss Rosemary Harmer of Tamworth and Mr John Gill of Wagga Wagga.

Bryant Burns
Chairman

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