

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

The Senate
Canberra
August 1991

EQUINE WELFARE - RODEOS

CHAPTER 1

RODEOS IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction

1.1 According to proponents of the sports, rodeo and campdraft competitions originated in the outback mustering camps where stockmen would display their skills in handling horses and mustering stock. Rodeo events and campdrafting became part of bushmen's carnivals and these have been held in various parts of the country since the 1920s. After World War II, rodeos became more popular and tended to take on a more American character. Professional rodeos are now conducted in all Australian States and the Northern Territory.

1.2 Up to 4,000 rodeo stock, including bucking horses and bulls, are used in almost 600 rodeos held each year. Most of these animals are owned by about 50 stock contractors, who are engaged by local rodeo committees to supply bucking stock for their rodeo. In addition to the bucking animals, an unknown number of calves, steers and bullocks is used each year for campdrafting as well as calf roping and steer wrestling.¹

1.3 In the following section of the report, the Committee addresses general aspects of Campdrafting and Rodeos.

Campdrafting

1.4 Campdrafting originated on outback cattle stations where cattleyards were few and fences almost non-existent. Stockmen would hold a large mob of cattle together, while the senior stockmen on "camp horses", would "cut out", or separate, certain beasts and move them into another mob. The skill of the "camp horses" became the subject of some rivalry, resulting in impromptu competitions. Gradually these competitions developed a set form and in the 1920s and 1930s large-scale competitions began.²

1.5 In campdrafting events, a horse and rider "cut out" a steer or bullock from a mob without disturbing the rest of the stock in a yard. The steer is "worked" backwards and forwards in front of the mob for about 10-20 seconds, and then is manoeuvred around two pegs and through a gate. In campdrafting, points are awarded for the skill of the horse and

rider in "working" the bullock. Although whips are not used in this sport, suitable spurs are allowed. Campdrafting is sometimes held in conjunction with rodeo events and, at other times, is held as a separate competition.

1.6 The campdraft horse is a stock horse bred for station or property work with cattle. Usually, the horse is not initiated into the sport until it is 5 or 6 years of age. Training, however, may begin at the age of 3 years when the horse is used for less demanding stock work.

1.7 Stock used in campdrafting are usually hereford-cross steers, bullocks or heifers. Some other beef breeds are also used. The ideal stock animal for campdrafting is a 2 to 4 year old bullock with a weight of less than 200 kilograms (440 lb).³

1.8 During the Committee's inquiry, animal welfare organisations did not identify any major problems with campdrafting. For example, Ms Amanda Large, Assistant Director, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, New South Wales, (RSPCA, NSW), noted that it was "one of the purest events in rodeo in that it is closest to normal husbandry procedures".⁴ Dr John Auty, Honorary Technical Adviser, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies (ANZFAS), also told the Committee that if cattle are handled properly this event is "acceptable" from an animal welfare point of view.⁵

Conclusion

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

Rodeo Events

1.10 Rodeos consist of a series of events in which competitors attempt to ride bucking horses and cattle or capture and subdue cattle. These events include:

- saddle bronc riding;
- bare back riding;
- bull riding;
- steer wrestling; and
- calf roping.

Saddle Bronc Riding

1.11 Saddle bronc riding, formerly known as buckjumping, is the oldest rodeo event and evolved from the need to tame or "break" horses for use as saddle or pack mounts.

1.12 The bucking horse is equipped with a head collar and rope lead, a saddle and a flank or kicking strap around its flanks. The equipment is placed on the horse in the chute prior to the event. The rider mounts the horse in the chute and the horse is subsequently released into the arena where the bucking performance takes place.⁶ In this event, the competitor attempts to ride a bucking horse for eight seconds, before being plucked from the saddle by mounted "pick-up" men. The competitor is judged on the ability to keep in rhythm with the bucking action of the horse. The rider must maintain a controlled style but not inhibit the horse's free action.

1.13 The rider wears blunt or dulled spurs that are free running, enabling riders to move their legs along the body of the horse without cutting into the flesh of the animal.⁷

Bare Back Riding

1.14 An extension of the saddle bronc contest, bare back riding was introduced into rodeos in the post-war period. The event evolved from the practice of riding horses without a saddle. This event extends the skill of the rider because the bucking horse is being ridden without a saddle or head reins.

1.15 In this event, the rider attempts to ride a bucking horse for eight seconds. Unlike saddle bronc riding, the rider does not have the use of a saddle or rope lead. Instead, the rider, with one hand, holds on to what is commonly termed "rigging", a type of wooden hand-hold or pommel set on a small padded base. This "rigging" is strapped around the girth of the horse. A flank strap is also applied. As with saddle bronc riding, blunt spurs are permitted.

Bull Riding

1.16 This event evolved from the practice of riding bullocks and steers in the early 1900s, and was introduced into rodeos in the early 1950s. In this event the rider attempts to ride a bull for eight seconds holding onto

a bull rope. The bull rope, a flat plaited rope, is fitted around the girth of the bull. A flank strap, which is usually a braided rope placed around the abdomen of the animal slightly forward of the hip, is also applied. As in other rodeo events, the rider of the bull wears blunt or dull spurs.⁸

Steer Wrestling

1.17 Steer wrestling was introduced into rodeos in the 1930s. In this event, a steer is released from a chute and pursued by two riders. One of these riders alights from the horse, grasps the steer by the horns and wrestles the animal to the ground.

1.18 The Committee was advised by rodeo organisations that horses used in this event need to be highly trained and responsive. Cattle used in these events may perform 30-40 times a year. The competitive life of an animal is dependent on its weight and once an animal becomes too heavy it is usually sold. The ideal weight for an animal is between 180 kilograms (396 lb) and 230 kilograms (506 lb). The animals are only used once in any competition.⁹

Calf Roping

1.19 In this event, a calf is released from a chute and pursued by a rider who attempts to throw a lasso around the calf's neck. When the calf is caught, the rider dismounts and immobilises the calf by tying three of its legs together with a piece of rope.

1.20 According to the Rodeo Associations, this event displays a co-ordinated effort of horse and rider. Horses used are required to be highly trained and responsive. The favoured breed used is the Quarter horse, a breed noted for its great speed over short distances.¹⁰

Incidence of Injuries

1.21 All witnesses who appeared before the Committee recognised that injuries to animals do occur during rodeo events. The nature and extent of these injuries, however, were disputed.

1.22 Mr John Gill, Stock Contractors' Representative with the Australian Professional Rodeo Association (APRA), told the Committee that horses can pull muscles and suffer skin abrasions and minor leg injuries.¹¹ Occasionally, a bucking horse may break a leg. Mr Gill advised the

Committee that injury levels have declined in recent years, because more contract stock are used, arena surfaces are safer and transport facilities have been improved.¹²

1.23 This evidence was questioned by some animal welfare organisations. They maintain that injuries sustained in rodeo events may be quite severe. For example, ANZFAS cited an incident at a rodeo in the Derwent Entertainment Centre in Hobart, Tasmania, in October 1990, when a horse emerged from a chute, collided with a steel fence and broke its neck.¹³ The Federation also claims that horses used in bucking events suffer severe abrasions and may receive open wounds. These are sometimes left untreated.¹⁴ According to ANZFAS, calves in roping events often break legs, suffer injuries to the neck structure and receive severe bruising.¹⁵

1.24 The Committee was interested to receive data on the extent and nature of injuries sustained by stock during rodeo events. The Committee, however, was advised that the Rodeo Associations do not collect this information.

1.25 Under the Victorian permit system, veterinarians are required to report on serious injuries suffered by stock at rodeos conducted in that State. The Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare has collated the following information on injuries:

Table 1.1: Number of Rodeos held in Victoria 1986-90 and Number of Serious Animal Injuries

YEAR	1990 (to Sept.)	1989	1988	1987	1986
NUMBER OF RODEOS	21	24	27	19	16
NUMBER OF SERIOUS INJURIES	3	8	11	6	1

Source: Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare.

Table 1.2: Classification and Outcome of Serious Injuries Reported

YEAR	INJURY	RESULT
1990	Bull - fractured spine Horse - wound from horn Bull - fractured spine	destroyed treated destroyed
1989	Horse - fractured neck Steer - fractured hock Bull - laceration Steer - lame Horse - laceration Horse - laceration Horse - laceration Horse - laceration	destroyed destroyed treated treated treated treated treated treated
1988	Bull - fractured leg Horse - girth injury Horse - wound from horn Horse - laceration Horse - laceration Steer - fractured leg Horse - laceration Steer - fractured leg Steer - fractured leg Steer - fractured leg Bull - laceration	destroyed treated treated treated treated destroyed treated destroyed destroyed destroyed treated
1987	Calf - stressed Bull - laceration Steer - fractured leg Bull - laceration Horse - fractured neck Horse - lame	treated treated destroyed treated died treated
1986	Horse - fractured spine	destroyed

Source: Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare.

1.26 Of the 29 serious injuries, including mortalities reported from 1986 to 1990, 15 related to cattle and 14 to horses. A further breakdown of this information indicates that of the twelve deaths reported, nine were cattle and three horses.

1.27 The Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals (AFWA), also referred the Committee to a study commissioned by the American Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association in 1985. This study was compiled by veterinarians engaged by local rodeo committees and covered 4,247 animal performances at six major rodeos. Twelve injuries were recorded, three resulting in death.¹⁶ According to AFWA, rodeo stock at these rodeos had a 0.28 per cent chance of injury during events. AFWA maintains that the risk of injury to rodeo stock is no greater than that to on-farm stock.

1.28 The Committee was also interested to obtain data on long-term physical damage to animals involved in rodeos. It seems that this information is not collected. AFWA, however, commented on this matter. The Federation drew the Committee's attention to the general good health and physical condition of most contractors' bucking stock. It also indicated that many bucking horses have long rodeo careers sometimes for as long as twenty years. The Federation added that this is "remarkable", especially when compared with thoroughbred horses, where few horses race beyond five years of age.¹⁷

1.29 The Federation observed:

The reasons for such prolonged fitness of some bucking horses are not obvious, but they may involve the robust conformation of the average rodeo horse, the relatively short performance times expected of them (8 seconds) or commencement of rodeo careers when fully matured. In any case, it is clear that they suffer little or no long term damage from their activities. Bulls have a shorter life span than horses but many bucking bulls continue to perform beyond ten years of age, and the same general remarks apply to them.¹⁸

1.30 Stock used in rodeos may also be subject to stress. ANZFAS argued that frequently rodeo animals are subject to stress due to unfamiliar surroundings, noise and other sensations.¹⁹ Dr Ian Gollan of

AFWA told the Committee that stress symptoms would likely be greater in non-contract stock unfamiliar with rodeos.²⁰

Conclusions

1.31 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.

1.32 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.

1.33 *The Committee recommends 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.*

Rodeo Associations

1.34 There are three main organisations conducting rodeos in Australia. These are the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association (ABCRA), the Australian Professional Rodeo Association and the National Rodeo Association.

1.35 The Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, formerly known as the Australian Bushmen's Carnival Association, was formed in 1946 and is the largest rodeo association in Australia.²¹ At the present time, it has 218 affiliated committees operating in NSW, Queensland and Victoria.²² In 1990, there were 3,578 competing members in the Association, comprising 2,492 senior members and 1,086 junior members, under the age of 17 years. There were 2,193 members involved in campdrafting and 1,284 involved in rodeos.²³

1.36 The Australian Professional Rodeo Association, or the Australian Rough Riders' Association as it was formerly known, was established in 1944. The Association conducts approximately 128 rodeos annually throughout Australia.²⁴ These are held in all States and the Northern Territory. The Association has 1,400 members and is affiliated with rodeo

associations in the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand.²⁵

1.37 The National Rodeo Association, which was founded in 1969, conducts rodeos in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia.²⁶ It has 400 members and 60 affiliated committees.²⁷

Views on Rodeos

1.38 Rodeo associations maintain that rodeos are not cruel or inhumane to the animals used in events. The Associations argue that animal welfare is a major consideration of all those involved in the sport. The Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, in its submission to the Committee, noted that rodeos are "conducted with strict rules regarding the handling of animals" and that these controls "promote animal welfare practices".²⁸ Mr Mervyn Button, Chief Executive Officer of the Association, explained:

The Association has always been quite aware of the importance of the welfare of the animals used. Fortunately, most of our committee members, and also our competitors, are domiciled in rural areas and are quite aware of looking after animals because, in the main, it is their livelihood.²⁹

1.39 The Rodeo Associations also informed the Committee that they are concerned about rodeos that are not conducted under the auspices and standards of conduct set by the associations. Mr William Urquhart, President of the National Rodeo Association, told the Committee that this matter was "an area of consistent concern to us".³⁰

1.40 The associations also expressed a willingness to introduce any changes that would promote the welfare of animals in rodeos. Mr Urquhart noted:

We want to see the sport survive... If we need to clean up our act, let us do it straight away.³¹

1.41 The Association also noted that it has built up a good rapport with the RSPCA in Queensland and the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council. Regarding its relationship with the Council, Mr Urquhart noted

that it had "adopted anything" the Council suggested "with regard to the welfare of animals at rodeos".³²

1.42 Additionally, the Associations maintain that rodeo events simulate skills and practices that are part and parcel of the Australian pioneering heritage. APRA, in its submission to the Committee, made the following observations:

Rodeos remain the only sport born of the founding and pioneering of our great nation. A definite parallel exists between our own heritage and the North American legend. Terminology merely differs e.g.: the Ranch Cowboy to the Australian Drover; the Outlaw to our Bushranger; and the Ranch to our Station.³³

1.43 Mr Gill, a member of APRA and a stock contractor for rodeos, has been involved in the sport all of his life. During the Committee's visit to his property at Wagga Wagga, Mr Gill emphasised the "family nature" of the sport and the concern that he and many others associated with the sport have for the animals. He also told the Committee that the welfare of his stock was important to him from an economic point of view. He also offered the following comment on the care of his stock:

If you have been in the sport all your life you will have had horses with you for up to 20 years, and a certain amount of sentiment comes in there as well.³⁴

1.44 During the inquiry, the Committee received considerable evidence from several organisations and individuals opposed to rodeos. Some animal welfare organisations, including RSPCA Australia and ANZFAS, argued that rodeos should be banned.

1.45 For example, Dr Hugh Wirth, President of RSPCA Australia, told the Committee that the national policy of the Society is to "implacably oppose rodeos".³⁵ In its submission to the inquiry, RSPCA Australia stated:

The RSPCA is opposed to rodeos as these events pose unacceptable risks to the animals involved purely for human pleasure. There is nothing in the Australian ethos that requires the conduct of rodeos whether to celebrate the skills of the Australian stockman, or to provide a training ground for stockworkers.³⁶

1.46 When appearing before the Committee at a public hearing, representatives of RSPCA (NSW) confirmed the Society's opposition to rodeos. Ms Amanda Large, Assistant Director of RSPCA (NSW), emphasised that rodeos pose "enormous potential animal welfare problems".³⁷ The New South Wales branch of the Society, however, recognised that rodeos are unlikely to be banned or phased out in the near future. The Society, therefore, accepts continuation of rodeos but only under stringent controls.³⁸

1.47 In its evidence to the Committee, the Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies recommended that rodeos be banned immediately. Ms Glenys Oogjes, Director of ANZFAS, told the Committee that rodeos, by their very nature, are cruel.³⁹ In support of this view, ANZFAS made the following statement to the Committee:

Rodeo is an exploitation of animals directly through cruelty. Its supporters, organisers and practitioners are all influenced by this cruelty and it grows on itself. ... Competitive rodeo is based on cruel practice and cannot be conducted in any form other than by the use of cruelty.⁴⁰

1.48 The Federation indicated, however, that if its recommendation to ban rodeos was not accepted, rodeos should be phased out over a fixed period. During this period, several reforms to the conduct of rodeos should be implemented. These reforms include the following:

- only rodeos conducted under the auspices of one of the three major organisations should be permitted;
- all rodeo operators should be subject to a national code of practice;
- spurs, goads and electric prods should be banned;
- the use of animals other than cattle or horses should be banned;
- calf roping should be banned; and
- a registered veterinarian should be present during rodeos.⁴¹

1.49 The Committee questioned the Federation on the banning or phasing out of rodeos. Ms Oogjes replied:

We want them banned for the ethical reasons that I have outlined. If that is not going to be an immediate recommendation of [the Select] Committee, then we have what could be called a fall-back position, that is, that they should be phased-out and while that is occurring that there should be a number of dramatic improvements in the conduct of those events.⁴²

1.50 When questioned on whether this position indicated a tacit acceptance of rodeos, Ms Oogjes responded:

No, not at all. We are just living in a practical world and we do not expect that rodeo will be stopped tomorrow, although it is our belief that it should be.⁴³

1.51 The Committee also questioned representatives of the Federation on the likely effect of the proposed reforms and, in particular, their implications for animal welfare. Ms Oogjes responded that the reforms proposed by ANZFAS may make rodeos more acceptable to the community. She, however, expressed the following reservation:

It would not make it more acceptable to us. We believe that because there is and always will remain the risk of injury and even death to animals, and because the only justification for rodeo as we see it is as an entertainment or a spectacle, then it cannot be justified and it should be stopped tomorrow.⁴⁴

1.52 In contrast to the views of other major animal welfare organisations noted above, the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals is not opposed to rodeos. In its submission to the inquiry, AFWA noted:

It appears that most bodies responsible for the organisation and running of modern rodeos are making genuine efforts to police themselves and prevent unnecessary cruelty to the animals involved. With the present safeguards and with continuing public vigilance at rodeos, the sport is a legitimate recreational use of horses and cattle.⁴⁵

1.53 While recognising that animals in rodeos are exploited for recreational purposes, Dr Gollan, a member of AFWA, questioned whether this was detrimental to the welfare of animals in rodeos. He observed:

It is very difficult to quantify psychological or emotional distress or stress in rodeo animals - or any animals for that matter - but their physical wellbeing can be fairly accurately assessed. The rodeo is something that on the whole is being actively and adequately addressed by the people charged with the conduct of rodeos in Australia at present.⁴⁶

1.54 The Australian Equine Veterinary Association (AEVA) expressed concerns about rodeos. In its submission, the Association argued that rodeos "are a major concern as the welfare of the animals involved is often of secondary importance".⁴⁷ Dr Colin Bassett, President of AEVA, recognised that, although rodeos remain a "potential source of concern" to the Association, "movements over the last 10 years to bring in stricter rules for the conduct of rodeos have improved the situation significantly".⁴⁸

Conclusions

1.55 During the inquiry, members of the Committee took the opportunity to inspect the conduct of rodeos at the National Championships in Tamworth in January 1991 and the Royal Easter Show in Sydney in March 1991. At these rodeos, members of the Committee also spoke to officials, competitors, stock owners, an RSPCA inspector and members of the general public.

1.56 The Committee was impressed with the attention given to the welfare of animals and, in particular, horses at these events. However, given the status and profile of these competitions, the Committee would not have expected anything less.

1.57 Unfortunately, the Committee's program for the inquiry did not allow inspections of smaller, local rodeos. Specific evidence presented at public hearings and anecdotal comments indicate that there are genuine concerns about the welfare of animals used at some of these venues.

1.58 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.

1.59 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.

1.60 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.

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 378.
2. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 9.
3. *ibid.*, p. 10.
4. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 360.
5. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 171.
6. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 188.
Evidence, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 378.
7. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 15.
8. *ibid.*, p. 18.
9. *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 24-5.
11. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 229.
12. *ibid.*, pp. 216-17.
13. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 160.
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*, p. 156.
16. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 382.
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.*
19. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 160.
20. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 392.

21. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 98.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
23. *ibid.*, p. 97.
24. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 216.
25. *ibid.*
26. *Evidence*, National Rodeo Association, p. 486.
27. Personal communication with the Committee, 2 May 1991.
28. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 37.
29. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 95.
30. *Evidence*, National Rodeo Association, p. 488.
31. *ibid.*, p. 501.
32. *ibid.*, p. 487.
33. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 187.
34. *ibid.*, p. 216.
35. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 136.
36. *ibid.*, p. 129.
37. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 342.
38. *ibid.*, p. 131.
39. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 178.
40. *ibid.*, pp. 161-2.
41. *ibid.*, p. 150.
42. *ibid.*, p. 168.
43. *ibid.*
44. *ibid.*, pp. 168-9.

45. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 383.
46. *ibid.*, p. 384.
47. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 4.
48. *ibid.*, p. 11.

CHAPTER 2

IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE AT RODEOS

Introduction

2.1 In the previous chapter, the Committee concluded that the welfare of animals used in rodeos must be protected at all times. In this chapter, the Committee considers ways in which the welfare of rodeo animals may be safeguarded through the regulation and control of rodeos. Five areas needing improvement became apparent during the inquiry. These are as follows:

- State regulations applying to rodeos;
- national approach;
- use of contract stock;
- veterinary supervision; and
- supervision of rodeos.

State Regulations Applying to Rodeos

2.2 Under the federal system of government in Australia, animal welfare is primarily the responsibility of State and Territory governments. Accordingly, these Governments have enacted legislation relating to the prevention of cruelty to animals. Currently, only New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have developed regulations that safeguard the welfare of animals used in rodeos.

New South Wales

2.3 In the mid 1980s, the New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council (NSW AWAC), after extensive consultation with interested parties, including representatives of rodeo organisations, produced a draft code on the welfare of animals in rodeos.¹ The Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events was gazetted in June 1986 as part of the Regulations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (NSW) 1979*. The Code provides a comprehensive set of guidelines on the selection, care and handling of stock used in rodeos.

2.4 Several contributors to the inquiry indicated that the conduct of rodeos in New South Wales has improved since the introduction of the

code of practice. For example, the Animal Welfare Advisory Council noted that there has been a "marked improvement in the standards of horse care in rodeos", following the introduction of the Code.² Dr Ian Gollan, a representative of the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, stated that the New South Wales Code was "working reasonably well".³

2.5 Rodeo organisations also support the New South Wales Code of Practice. Mr Mervyn Button, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, told the Committee:

We have been working under this [NSW] code since it was instigated in 1986 and it is working very well. We are quite happy with it; and the Animal Welfare Advisory Council is quite happy with it. In fact, it was agreed originally that it would be reviewed every two years and I believe the Animal Welfare Advisory Council has now extended that period to a five year revision which, I think, speaks for itself; that it is working quite well as far as the New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council is concerned.⁴

2.6 RSPCA (NSW), however, is less enthusiastic about the impact of the Code of Practice. The Society recognises that although the Code provides a "statement of minimum requirements" for the conduct of rodeos, it is not ideal.⁵

2.7 The Committee was particularly interested to hear from RSPCA (NSW) and the Animal Welfare Advisory Council in New South Wales that the number of complaints about rodeos has decreased since the introduction of the Code. Between October 1983 and October 1985 eleven complaints were lodged with NSW AWAC. Since the introduction of the Code no complaints were lodged until December 1990, when five were received.⁶ RSPCA (NSW) confirmed that there has been a recent increase in the number of complaints about rodeos.⁷

2.8 As indicated above, RSPCA (NSW) expressed reservations about the workings of the Code of Practice. The Society indicated that the lack of penalties for breaches of the Code is a major deficiency within the New South Wales Code.⁸ Ms Amanda Large, Assistant Director of the Society, told the Committee that "because it is a regulation it is certainly not perceived to be as strong a control as actual penalties within the Act

itself".⁹ She added that "the code in itself is part of the regulations and does not of itself provide for penalties".¹⁰

Victoria

2.9 Under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (Vic.)* 1986, a permit is required to conduct rodeos or rodeo schools in Victoria. The Regulations under the Act set out the restrictions on the supply of animals to be used in rodeos and the responsibilities of stock contractors. The regulations provide that only stock supplied by a stock contractor can be used at all rodeos.

2.10 The Committee also received evidence supporting the Victorian permit system. According to RSPCA Australia, the permit system introduced in Victoria is "a major step to control the abuse of animals in rodeos".¹¹ When questioned on the impact of these regulations, Dr Hugh Wirth, President of the Society, agreed that the introduction of the permit system has reduced the opposition to rodeos in that State.¹² Dr Colin Bassett, President of the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, confirmed that the regulatory arrangements appeared to be working "reasonably well".¹³

South Australia

2.11 In South Australia, the Regulations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (SA)* 1985 provide that all persons conducting rodeos must hold a permit. The permit *inter alia* provides that a veterinarian should be in attendance during all rodeos.

2.12 The Committee was told by the South Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee that, under the existing provisions of the permit system, rodeo organisations found to be in breach of their permit cannot be prosecuted.¹⁴ Ms Joyleen Farrelly, Executive Officer of the South Australian Animal Welfare Office, explained:

In fact, we do not actually have a breach of permit under our legislation; so if they [rodeo organisers] do breach the permit we cannot prosecute them. I think that was an oversight when the regulations were first drafted.¹⁵

2.13 The South Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee explained that, given the difficulties with the present permit system, the Government is considering the introduction of a Code of Practice for rodeos.¹⁶

Other States and Territories

2.14 The Committee understands that, apart from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, no other States or Territories have specific regulations or codes of practice relating to the control of rodeos.

2.15 The Committee is aware that the Queensland Government is reviewing its *Animals Protection Act (Qld)* 1925. As part of this review, the Government issued a discussion paper on issues relating to animal welfare. Included are proposals relating to the conditions, standards and licensing of rodeos and other equine events in Queensland.¹⁷ The Committee also understands that Tasmania is currently reviewing its *Cruelty to Animals Prevention Act (Tas.)* 1925 and the regulation of rodeos may be addressed in the new legislation.¹⁸

2.16 Witnesses who appeared before the Committee, including RSPCA (NSW)¹⁹ and NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council supported the adoption of codes of practice by all States and Territories.

Conclusions

2.17 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.

2.18 The Committee recommends 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.

National Approach

2.19 The Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies²⁰ recommended to the Committee that all rodeo operators and participants should be subject to a National Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events. The Federation suggested that the content of the code should be decided upon by representatives of animal welfare organisations, the three Rodeo Associations and other interested parties.

2.20 When questioned on the "best system" for controlling the conduct of rodeos in Australia, Mr Button of the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, also favoured the introduction of a national code of practice for rodeos.²¹

Conclusion

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

Use of Contract Stock

2.22 The Committee understands that Victoria is the only State or Territory in Australia that requires all animals used in rodeos to be supplied by an approved stock contractor.²²

2.23 The Regulations in New South Wales also recognise that contract stock should be used in rodeos. Since 1989, however, an exemption to this general provision has applied. The relevant clause states:

Where animals for use in bucking events cannot be supplied by an approved contractor, rodeo associations may accept as contract stock those animals which have, within 21 days immediately preceding the event, been certified in writing as being fit and suitable for this purpose by an officer as defined under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.²³

2.24 Animal welfare groups and rodeo organisations agree that only contract stock, supplied by a contractor, affiliated with one of the Rodeo Associations, should be used in rodeos. For example, ANZFAS recommends that the use of animals other than those from a recognised

stock contractor should be banned.²⁴ Likewise, RSPCA (NSW) maintains that "all bucking horses used in rodeo should be supplied by a professional contractor whose standards meet those demanded" by the three Rodeo Associations.²⁵

2.25 Dr Gollan, a member of the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, elaborated on this issue. He said:

I certainly think it is desirable to use contract stock because it has been proven that it is in the rodeo committee's interests, both financially and from a public relations point of view, to have a horse that does the job well and does not knock itself about once it has disposed of the rider.²⁶

2.26 These views were shared by representatives of the Rodeo Associations who appeared before the Committee. Mr Ramon Blanchard, Board Representative, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, supported the use of contract stock "for the betterment of our profession".²⁷

Contract Stock

2.27 Evidence to the Committee suggests that stock supplied to rodeos by stock contractors are fit, accustomed to any stresses associated with rodeo activities and are therefore less likely to suffer injuries. This is particularly the case with horses. Contract stock are recognised by owners as valuable animals, in a financial sense, and therefore are well cared for.²⁸ Contract stock also are better rodeo performers.²⁹

2.28 The Committee was advised that there is a dramatic improvement in animal welfare when contract stock are used.³⁰ In its submission, RSPCA (NSW) noted that many difficulties associated with rearing, chute fighting and the problem of terrified horses are eliminated when contract horses are used.³¹

Non-Contract Stock

2.29 Rodeo committees, particularly in smaller and remoter venues, may use non-contract stock. Stock that are owned and maintained by the committee or obtained from local properties or other sources are used each year at the rodeo.

2.30 Non-contract stock, therefore, may include animals that are unaccustomed to handling, such as those purchased from saleyards or run in from local properties on the day of the rodeo. These animals are unused to yarding and handling procedures and may panic or attempt to escape from unfamiliar situations, causing injuries to themselves or other animals.³²

2.31 The Committee received evidence that where non-contract stock are used the welfare of animals in rodeos may be seriously compromised. For example, both the New South Wales AWAC and Miss Rosemary Harmer, a Regional Inspector with RSPCA (NSW),³³ drew the Committee's attention to problems associated with a rodeo held at Wanaaring, New South Wales. According to these witnesses, non-contract stock were used at this rodeo.

2.32 Miss Harmer noted difficulties with non-contract stock used at Wanaaring, even before the rodeo began:

Non-contract horses had been used only a few times in the year. They were transported on cattle trucks. A number of them had injuries, which were apparently incurred while they were being transported. ... They are brought 70 miles the day before the event and held in yards. These horses have been turned out the whole year and have not seen a human. The horses are enclosed and run through pipe yards, which admittedly were very well constructed but still quite damaging. Basically all of them except for five were not suited to being used in a rodeo.³⁴

2.33 Miss Harmer also noted problems during the course of the rodeo. According to her report on the rodeo, horses in the chutes prior to release "either attempted to jump the chute, reared continually or went down in the chute".³⁵ These horses were unfamiliar with yarding and handling and became frightened and tried to escape. The Society's report on this rodeo noted:

There were 26 head (of horses), the majority of which were unwilling to go through gates, up races or into the chutes, despite very careful handling. All horses, with the exception of five, adopted a "saw horse" position, exhibiting sweating and muscular tremors ... Each animal was examined and

handled around the head and neck. Two were removed from the draft after persistently rearing...

The rodeo finally commenced with very careful movement of the stock into the yards and chutes - despite this, over half the horses used ... either attempted to jump the chute, reared continually or went down in the chute ... We were asked to inspect one horse which had torn its side in the yards.³⁶

2.34 Problems with non-contract stock at this rodeo continued. Miss Harmer reported:

As we were preparing to leave at approximately 4.00pm, a beast which had been bucked out went down and was unable to rise, after some delay while I explained that there should be a designated person there to destroy livestock and not rely on the local police officer to do it, the animal was dispatched behind a screen and dragged away.³⁷

2.35 The Committee understands that non-contract stock are often used in remote areas. This is because it may be uneconomic for contractors to supply stock to these venues. According to evidence given to the Committee, this was the reasoning behind the exemption relating to bucking horses introduced into New South Wales in 1989.³⁸ According to Ms Large, a representative of RSPCA (NSW), some rodeo committees are also reluctant to use contract stock because of the costs involved. She suggested, however, that these costs could be met by increasing entry fees.³⁹

2.36 It was also put to the Committee that rodeo committees are finding it "more convenient" to contract their rodeos to a recognised contractor. By doing this committees "are assured that they are going to get stock that will buck and will provide a spectacle for their crowd".⁴⁰

2.37 The Committee is also aware that many rodeos that use non-contract stock are held to raise funds for local charity. Commenting on this matter, Miss Harmer of RSPCA (NSW) related to the Committee her experience of at least one rodeo that used non-contract stock. She stated:

They could hold a chook raffle and still make as much cash for charity... There were only five cowboys there. The entry money was hardly going to contribute a great deal to charity. They probably made more money out of the sporting day and cow rides than they would have out of the horse events, which resulted in a lot of trauma and required a lot of effort, time and manpower. That money could have been raised very easily in some other way.⁴¹

Exemptions to the Use of Non-Contract Stock

2.38 The NSW AWAC and RSPCA (NSW)⁴², noted potential problems associated with the exemption to the use of contract stock in the NSW Code. Firstly, NSW AWAC noted that pressure could be placed on inspecting officers to pass bucking horses as fit and suitable. Rejection of horses could result in the cancellation of the rodeo. Secondly, an assessment of a horse's temperamental suitability prior to a rodeo is difficult. Thirdly, although it may be possible for rodeo organisers in remote areas to minimise potential problems by arranging early inspections and familiarising non-contract horses with rodeo procedures, such practices "have not uniformly been implemented".⁴³

2.39 RSPCA (NSW) also indicated that there have been occasions when non-contract horses have been used in rodeos without certification required under the Code.⁴⁴

Conclusions

2.40 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. *The Committee therefore recommends 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.*

Veterinary Supervision

2.41 Given the nature of rodeos and the possibility of animals sustaining injuries during these events, several contributors to the inquiry recognised the importance of some form of veterinary attendance or supervision.

2.42 In Victoria, regulations provide that an approved veterinary surgeon must be engaged to attend full-time during all phases of a rodeo. Following the completion of the rodeo, the veterinary surgeon must provide a written report on all animals that suffered injury.⁴⁵

2.43 Under the New South Wales Code of Practice a veterinarian must either be in attendance at a rodeo, or on call and available to attend within a reasonable period of time.⁴⁶

2.44 Certain organisations, including the Australian Equine Veterinary Association and ANZFAS argued that a registered veterinarian should be required to be in attendance at all rodeos.⁴⁷

2.45 The Committee was concerned to receive evidence suggesting that, in some cases, a veterinarian is neither in attendance nor on call at rodeos.⁴⁸ ANZFAS informed the Committee that when this occurs injured animals may be left untreated and in considerable pain for long periods.⁴⁹ Miss Harmer, an RSPCA Inspector in New South Wales, expressed similar views, giving as an example a rodeo held at Wanaaring. According to Miss Harmer, there was no veterinarian present or on call. She also observed that the nearest veterinarian was a 2½ hour drive away.⁵⁰

2.46 Some witnesses maintain that it is not necessary to have a veterinarian in attendance at all rodeos. For example, Mr Gill, a representative of the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, claimed that it was sufficient to have a veterinarian on call. If an animal was seriously injured it could be placed on a trailer or truck and taken to a veterinarian as soon as possible. He suggested that in cases where an animal had to be put down there was always someone available at the rodeo to undertake the task.⁵¹ Dr Basset of the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, however, told the Committee that while a person experienced with stock may provide some assistance to an injured animal, the assistance provided will often be of inferior quality.⁵²

2.47 Other contributors also maintain that it is not always possible for rodeos to have access to a veterinarian. Mr Vivers of the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, identified problems associated with the compulsory attendance of a veterinarian at rodeos in remote areas. He stated:

I had a talk to our local vet and he said there was no way he could do it. He said that if someone's mare was about to have a Bletchingly foal, there is no way he would be sitting on a rodeo ground watching all day.⁵³

2.48 Dr Gollan, a member of AFWA, informed the Committee that "at most places where rodeos are held, there is access to veterinarian treatment".⁵⁴ He added:

Certainly at rodeos in our area we are only called intermittently to treat animals that are hurt. I have an open mind as to whether it should be mandatory to have veterinarian attendance.⁵⁵

Conclusions

2.49 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.

Supervision of Rodeos

2.50 In those States that have regulations on rodeos, the veterinarian or livestock examiner is responsible for determining whether an animal should be allowed to compete in rodeo events.

2.51 In Victoria, the holder of a permit for a rodeo must accept the decision of the registered veterinary surgeon on the fitness or otherwise of an animal.

2.52 In New South Wales, the Code of Practice provides the following:

The veterinarian in attendance, or the livestock examiner when a veterinarian is not in attendance, shall be the sole arbiter, following examination, of whether an animal is fit for use in an event.⁵⁶

2.53 In South Australia a veterinary surgeon is required to examine stock for fitness before and after events.⁵⁷

2.54 Although State regulations provide some guidance on the supervision of animal welfare at rodeos, the Committee received conflicting evidence on responsibilities in this area. Dr Mary Barton, Chairman of the South Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, summarised the problem in the following statement to the Committee:

In a particular instance, the stock contractor wanted to take that animal home and slaughter it for meat, when in the opinion of the veterinarian the animal should have been destroyed straight away. The veterinarian won in the end but he felt that he had had an unnecessary battle. What he drew our attention to was, to whom is the veterinarian responsible at a rodeo event? At race meetings they are responsible to the chief steward and the chain of command is quite clear. They felt that at least in the South Australian situation the chain of command is not clear.⁵⁸

2.55 This lack of clear lines of authority in the supervision of rodeos was reflected in other evidence presented during the inquiry.

2.56 Apart from a veterinarian or livestock examiner, the Committee was told that the chute boss, stock contractor, judges and RSPCA inspectors have responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of animals used in rodeo events. It was not made clear which of these officials, if any, is the final arbiter on disputes relating to animal welfare.⁵⁹

2.57 Dr Gollan, appearing on behalf of the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, told the Committee that he considers that the veterinarian, having the appropriate "physiological, anatomical and medical background", should be the final arbiter.⁶⁰ He added the following reservation:

The other point to make about veterinary supervision is that you do need someone experienced in the behaviour of large and fairly robust and wild animals to make that judgment. I think in many cases the people who ride the bucking horses and who have responsibility for them have wide experience, perhaps in some cases more so than the local animal veterinarians.⁶¹

Conclusions

2.58 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.

2.59 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.

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 265.
2. *ibid.*, p. 268.
3. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, pp. 393-4.
4. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 95.
5. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 328.
6. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 267; p. 294.
7. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 363.
8. *ibid.*, p. 328; p. 343.
9. *ibid.*, p. 343.
10. *ibid.*, p. 344.
11. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 130.
12. *ibid.*, p. 137.
13. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 31.
14. *Evidence*, South Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, p. 416.
15. *ibid.*
16. *ibid.*, pp. 407-8.
17. Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government, *Discussion Paper: Proposals for New Laws Dealing with Animal Welfare and Protection*, December 1990, p. 16.

18. *Correspondence*, National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare, 2 July 1991.
19. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 317.
20. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 150.
21. *ibid.*, p. 150.
Evidence, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 109.
22. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 129.
23. *New South Wales Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events, Clause 2.5.*
24. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 150; p. 155.
25. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 322.
26. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 394.
27. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 226.
28. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, pp. 266-7.
29. *ibid.*, p. 299.
Evidence, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 349.
Evidence, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 389.
30. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 295.
31. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 322.
32. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p.266.
33. *ibid.*, p. 295.
Evidence, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 369.
34. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 351.

35. *ibid.*, pp. 333-4.
36. *ibid.*, p. 318.
37. *ibid.*, p. 334.
38. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 295.
39. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 349.
40. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 390.
41. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 369.
42. *ibid.*, pp. 321-22.
43. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p.269.
44. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 321.
45. *Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1986*.
46. *New South Wales Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events, Clause 4.2*.
47. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 4.
Evidence, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 150.
48. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 112; p. 160; p. 297.
49. *ibid.*, p. 160.
50. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 334.
51. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 225.
52. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 26.
53. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 112.
54. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 394.

55. *ibid.*
56. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 281.
57. *Evidence*, South Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, p. 416.
58. *ibid.*, p. 407.
59. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 398.
60. *ibid.*, p. 397.
61. *ibid.*, p. 398.

CHAPTER 3

CONCERNS ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF RODEOS

Introduction

3.1 In the previous chapter, the Committee discussed the regulation and control of rodeos. In this chapter, the focus is on concerns raised in evidence about certain aspects of rodeos. These concerns relate to:

- training and handling of horses;
- use of flank straps;
- use of electric prods;
- use of spurs;
- transport;
- yarding;
- arena surfaces;
- horses used in events other than bucking; and
- other animals.

Training and Handling of Horses

3.2 Evidence presented during the inquiry suggests that there are animal welfare problems associated with the training and handling of bucking horses. For example, the Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies claims that horses are encouraged to buck by poor handling and breaking.¹ The Federation also maintains that horses achieve the requisite standard for competition merely by the "repeated success in ridding themselves of their riders".² According to this animal welfare organisation, training methods also include the use of goads.

3.3 This evidence was disputed by representatives of Rodeo Associations. The Committee was told that bucking horses are obtained from a variety of sources, including riding schools, pony clubs and rural properties. These horses have often been identified as having a propensity or an aptitude for bucking. Indeed, it was suggested that some horses have a natural bucking ability and that this will be developed with training.

3.4 Horses that display an aptitude to buck are encouraged in training sessions to continue bucking. According to Mr John Gill, Stock

Contractors' Representative with the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, the training involves riders being thrown from the horses. This process encourages the horses to buck.³ It may take three years to train a horse to the standard required of a professional bucking horse.⁴

3.5 Representatives of Rodeo Associations maintain that undesirable training practices are not used.⁵ Mr Gill told the Committee that cruel practices, such as the use of goads, would be counter-productive in the training of bucking stock.⁶ Mr William Vivers, Director of the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, confirmed this view. He observed:

Actually, cruelty to rodeo animals is self-defeating, I believe, because a horse that is frightened of what is going to happen to it will not perform.⁷

3.6 Mr Mervyn Button, who also appeared on behalf of the ABCRA, added that his Association had not received any complaints about the training methods used to prepare animals for rodeos.⁸

3.7 The Committee inspected the training of horses and cattle for the rodeo circuit on a property at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. During these training sessions, the horses were relaxed prior to being led into the chutes and remained so while the flank straps were fitted. During these sessions no physical force was used, let alone goads or prods.

3.8 During informal discussions with members of the Committee, organisers, competitors, stock contractors and other personnel involved in the rodeos held in Tamworth and at the Sydney Royal Easter Show confirmed that considerable emphasis is placed on the proper training and preparation of stock. These views were reinforced at the Committee's public hearings.⁹ The Committee, however, notes that this evidence related to stock owned and supplied by accredited stock contractors.

3.9 Evidence also suggests that riders need to be trained in the correct riding and handling techniques. Mr Gill of APRA told the Committee that "today's competitors are more informed about the bucking action of stock and the physiology and psychology of horses generally".¹⁰ This knowledge is acquired through training and reinforced in competitions.

3.10 The Committee was advised that riders progress through an "apprenticeship system", involving novice and second division events. There are also rodeo schools conducted by professional competitors that provide training in the correct use of the rodeo equipment and riding techniques.¹¹

3.11 Mr Vivers of ABCRA told the Committee that these skills are maintained in practice sessions. He commented:

A contractor is only too happy to have some of these young fellows come along to try his horses out.¹²

Conclusions

3.12 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.

3.13 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.

3.14 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.

Use of Flank Straps

3.15 A flank strap is a belt fastened around the hind quarters of bucking horses and bulls. The strap is made of soft leather usually five centimetres wide and is covered by a sheepskin lining.

3.16 The strap is placed on a bucking horse slightly above the hip bone and encircles the animals flanks. It is fitted with a quick release mechanism for easy access and speedy removal. The aim of the flank strap is to encourage the horse to buck high and kick out with its hind legs.

3.17 During the inquiry, the Committee heard conflicting evidence on the purpose, effect and the need to use flank straps. The Committee reviews this evidence in the following section of the report.

Purpose of Flank Straps

3.18 Representatives of the Rodeo Associations emphasised that the flank strap should be seen as an important "control mechanism" that encourages the horse to kick out with its hind legs with a symmetry of motion. Mr Gill of APRA told the Committee that the flank strap determines the bucking action of the horse or bull. He explained that "the correct motion of a bucking horse is the jump and kick fashion, where the front feet come down and then the back legs [kick out]".¹³

3.19 Mr Button of the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, also observed that the natural bucking motion of most horses is to kick sideways.¹⁴ He stated:

One of the main reasons for the application of a flank strap ... is to make it kick its back legs out so that it is in its point of balance, whereas a horse's natural bucking habit is to kick sideways. If you can make it kick straight, it is a lot safer for the horse and eventually for the rider.¹⁵

3.20 According to the Campdraft Association, a bucking horse will risk injury if a flank strap is not used to co-ordinate its movements.¹⁶

3.21 The Committee asked several witnesses whether horses will buck without a flank strap. Mr Vivers and Mr Button¹⁷ of the Campdraft Association, and Mr Gill¹⁸ of the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, told the Committee that some horses will buck without a flank strap attached. Mr Gill stated:

Horses would buck; they will always buck. Most of them would be rearing at the front. They will always buck once they know that they can throw riders.¹⁹

3.22 In contrast, ANZFAS, in its submission, claimed that few animals would buck without the flank strap. Dr John Auty, a member of the Federation, informed the Committee that "some rare animals might do that but they tend to give it away over time".²⁰ He added:

The fact is that horses are made to buck by flank straps and encouraged to continue to buck by people falling off them.²¹

3.23 Ms Glenys Oogjes, Director of ANZFAS, also told the Committee that, even if horses and bulls bucked without a flank strap, "they would not buck in the dramatic way they do with the flank strap".²²

Effect of Flank Straps

3.24 It was suggested to the Committee that the use of the flank strap caused considerable pain to the animals involved. For example, ANZFAS maintains that the application of the flank strap causes irritation and pain. The Federation argues that, at the very least, the flank strap is a "severe annoyance" because it applies pressure to sensitive areas of a horse's anatomy.²³

3.25 Other evidence, however, disputed the harmful effect of the strap on horses and bulls in rodeo events. The Australian Equine Veterinary Association,²⁴ rodeo organisations, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals and the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council,²⁵ maintain that the flank strap acts as an irritant to the animal. In its submission, AFWA stated:

There is no doubt that these devices are resented by both horses and bulls, but they cannot realistically be considered as painful.²⁶

3.26 Mr Colin McCaskill, a member of the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council, advised the Committee of one view that maintains that "if a flank rope is properly put on and adjusted to a horse, there is no problem at all".²⁷

3.27 The Rodeo Associations argue the heavy muscular structures situated around the flank area where the straps are placed protect the animal's internal organs.²⁸ However, Mr Vivers of the Campdraft Association, conceded that the flank area is a sensitive part of the animal's anatomy and that is why the flank strap is applied to that part of the body.²⁹

3.28 The effect of the sheepskin lining of the flank strap was also called into question. ANZFAS suggested that these linings become hard after continuous contact with sweat from the animals.³⁰ The stiffened surface of the strap increases the irritation of the bucking animals.

3.29 Miss Lynette Chave, Special Veterinary Officer, Animal Welfare Branch, New South Wales Department of Local Government, however, provided the Committee with a different view on this matter. She advised that the lining of the flank strap prevented chafing and would cause some irritation only if it became sandy or dusty.³¹ The harmful effects of the sheepskin lining was also disputed by representatives of the Rodeo Associations.³²

Continuing Use of Flank Straps

3.30 Animal welfare organisations perceive flank straps as an integral part of rodeos. Dr Hugh Wirth, President of RSPCA Australia, told the Committee that the flank strap "is a well-known means of forcing a horse to [buck]" and that this "behavioural action of horses" is misused to achieve a result.³³ According to Dr Wirth, RSPCA Australia "cannot condone" the use of flank straps.³⁴

3.31 This evidence was rejected by the Rodeo Associations. Mr Ramon Blanchard, Board Representative with the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, told the Committee that he has "never seen a proper flank strap injure a horse."³⁵ Mr Button of the Campdraft Association, indicated that the flank straps were specifically designed "to make sure there is no damage done to the animal".³⁶

Conclusions

3.32 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.

3.33 Members of the Committee inspected rodeo stock after events at the National Championships in Tamworth and at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Committee did not observe any injuries or detect any visible signs of irritation as a result of the use of flank straps. Indeed, at Tamworth, the Committee observed contractors brushing flank straps to remove sand and other material as well as applying talcum powder to soften the sheepskin lining.

Use of Electric Prods

3.34 Electric prods are used to encourage bucking horses and bulls to clear the chute area.

3.35 Regulatory arrangements in New South Wales and Victoria address specifically the use of electric prods on horses and bulls involved in rodeo events. In New South Wales, the following regulation applies:

Standard electric prods shall be used as little as possible and may be powered by battery or dynamo only. Prods must be in accordance with the regulations under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and must not be used inside the arena.

Cattle may only be prodded in the shoulder or rump. A prod may only be used instantaneously on the shoulder of a bucking horse to clear it from the chute on opening of the gate, and may be used only by the contractor or his nominee. When non-contract bucking horses are used the prod may be used only by a person authorised by the chute boss.³⁷

3.36 The relevant Victorian regulation provides that:

An electric charge must not be used in connection with the movement or herding of any animal other than by means of a battery-loaded device known as a 'Cattle Prodder'. The 'Cattle Prodder' must be used only on the hip or shoulder areas of the animal.³⁸

3.37 The use of electric prods has been criticised by some animal welfare organisations. For example, ANZFAS recommends that the use of these prods should be banned immediately.³⁹ According to the

Federation, the use of electric prods causes pain and stress. While the use of prods is confined officially to the hip or shoulder areas of animals, the Federation maintains that they are often applied to sensitive areas of the anatomy. ANZFAS also claims that when an electric prod is applied, the horse or bull will often rear and sometimes attempt to climb out of the chute.⁴⁰ It was also suggested to the Committee that electric prods are often used to torment rodeo animals.

3.38 Rodeo organisations support the use of electric prods, arguing that they are an essential safety device that encourage an animal to clear the chute, thereby minimising the risk of injury.⁴¹ Mr Gill of APRA advised the Committee on what would happen if a prod were used improperly:

A horse in a frightened state through the use of a prod will not buck, but will attempt to gallop away from the source of the pain.⁴²

3.39 The Committee questioned the representatives from the Rodeo Associations concerning the severity of the charge given off by the prod. It was claimed the standard electric prods used in rodeos create no more than a mild electric shock because of their low voltage levels.⁴³ Mr Blanchard, a member of APRA, advised that the charge was "easily bearable" even if applied to a human.⁴⁴

3.40 Miss Rosemary Harmer, an inspector with RSPCA (NSW), told the Committee that, based on her experience, the prod was not misused at rodeo events. She observed:

Certainly the potential is there for them to be misused but I have to say that, particularly with contract stock, because you either have the contractor or a nominated person then they are pretty well aware of each individual animal. That is the big thing, knowing how that particular animal will go out of a chute and knowing when to prod and where to prod to make it safe for the animal. ... Generally it is not abused.⁴⁵

3.41 Mr McCaskill of the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council, however, expressed the view that prods were still used "excessively" on horses, particularly non-contract horses.⁴⁶

Conclusions

3.42 Persuasive evidence, including statements from some animal welfare groups, suggests that there are no major animal welfare problems associated with the use of electric prods on horses and bulls in bucking events at rodeos. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about excessive and unauthorised use of electric prods on rodeo stock while in the chute.

3.43 During inspections of rodeos in Tamworth and Sydney, members of the Committee gained the impression that too much reliance is placed on the use of the prod. 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.

3.44 The Committee also holds the view that an electric prod should only be used by authorised and responsible persons. Given the need for sound judgement and quick responses in the chute area, the Committee considers that it is inappropriate for an adolescent to use the prod, as was the case at one rodeo attended by the Committee.

3.45 The Committee recommends 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. The Committee has also addressed this issue in a forthcoming report on the transport of livestock within Australia.

Use of Spurs

3.46 Spurs are worn by all riders in the bucking events. The spurs have blunt rowels, or star-shaped wheels, and are about 3mm thick. According to the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, spurs are designed so that they will not cut into an animal.⁴⁷

3.47 In the saddle bronc event, the rider spurs his mount by sliding his feet along the sides of the horse to a point near the back of the saddle. The spurring style for bare back events is different with the rider adopting

an exaggerated forward leg motion which brings the spurs into contact with the horse in the shoulder region.⁴⁸

Regulations on Types of Spurs

3.48 The regulatory arrangements in New South Wales and Victoria address the types of spurs that may be used in bucking events. The following regulation applies in New South Wales:

Locked rowels, or rowels that will lock on spurs, or sharpened spurs shall not be used on horses or cattle under any circumstances. Semi-locked rowels may be used on cattle.⁴⁹

3.49 Conditions for a rodeo permit in Victoria stipulate that:

Paddles, fully-locked rowels or rowels that are capable of being fully-locked on spurs must not be used on any horse.⁵⁰

3.50 The rules of the Rodeo Associations also prohibit the use of sharpened spurs, locked rowels or rowels that will lock on spurs.⁵¹ Riders found to be using these spurs are disqualified.⁵² The Committee, however, understands that the riders' spurs are not always inspected before events to ensure that proper equipment is being used.

Views on the Use of Spurs

3.51 Some animal welfare organisations are opposed to the use of spurs in rodeos. ANZFAS argues that their use should be banned. The Federation maintains that they cause intense pain to the horse. In particular, the action of the spur forward of the saddle in bucking events is painful whether spurs are blunt or rowelled.⁵³

3.52 RSPCA Australia is also opposed to the use of spurs in rodeos. The Society advised the Committee that their use "cannot be condoned".⁵⁴ Although regulations such as those introduced into Victoria "are a major step in controlling the abuse of animals in rodeos", the Society considers that the sanctioning of the continued use of spurs is a deficiency.⁵⁵

3.53 Miss Harmer of RSPCA (NSW) expressed the view that if used properly, spurs in bucking events are not a problem.⁵⁶ While not referring specifically to the use of spurs in these events, she stated:

Spurs are meant to be aids to enforce something if the horse has ignored you. They are not meant to punish the horse ... I have to agree that if they are used properly they are not a problem, but they can be used inappropriately.⁵⁷

3.54 Incorrect spurring action may leave spur marks on an animal. Again, Miss Harmer explained:

It is possible to mark stock even if you do not have sharp spurs. It is the action that causes the damage. Time and time again particular riders in rodeos damage the animal by the way they spur.⁵⁸

3.55 In other cases, there may be no marks left on the animal, even after vigorous spurring.

3.56 The Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals does not support calls to ban the use of spurs. This animal welfare organisation questions whether spurs inflict severe pain. In its submission, AFWA noted:

Having regard to the blunt surfaces of the rowels, the thickness of the animal's skin ... and the absence of any visible damage to the animals, it does not seem likely that significant pain is inflicted.⁵⁹

3.57 Dr Ian Gollan, a member of AFWA, confirmed evidence from RSPCA (NSW) that even when visible spur marks were observed on animals, the wounds were relatively superficial.⁶⁰ AFWA also claimed that with the type of leg motion used in the saddle bronc events, the rowels made very little contact with the horse's skin, except during the "mark out" from the chute during the first buck.⁶¹

3.58 The Rodeo Associations claimed that spurs serve as a device to assist with the riding technique and do not injure the animals. Mr Blanchard of APRA explained to the Committee:

The spurs used are blunt, free rolling spurs which are standard equipment and policed very closely. If you were to observe any number of saddle bronc or bare back bronc rides you would clearly see that on a lot of occasions the spur is not even in contact with the animal. I notice this a lot ... just how few of the riders can actually maintain full spur contact with a horse. But even the good and accomplished riders that do maintain that full spur contact do not injure the horses. There is a severe penalty that would be handed out if it were to happen.⁶²

Conclusions

3.59 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.

3.60 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.

Reservations

3.61 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.

Transport

3.62 The Australian Professional Rodeo Association emphasised to the Committee that contract stock are transported many times during a year and therefore are usually calm and relaxed while travelling.⁶³ Because bucking stock are transported regularly, they are more accustomed to

standing side-by-side, head-to-tail, across the width of the truck than domestic livestock.⁶⁴

3.63 RSPCA (NSW) did not dispute this evidence. It advised the Committee that the transport of horses to and from rodeos is no better or worse than the transport of horses generally.⁶⁵ The Society did, however, indicate that contract stock being transported are better cared for than non-contract stock. Ms Amanda Large, Assistant Director of RSPCA (NSW), observed:

The good contract horses are also very valuable animals and the more valuable they are, the better the transport that will be provided for them.⁶⁶

3.64 Miss Harmer of RSPCA (NSW), also noted that there were not "a lot of transport injuries on contract stock".⁶⁷

3.65 ANZFAS, however, expressed concerns about the transport of rodeo animals. The Federation maintains that stock are frequently stressed by transport, especially when transported over long distances in extreme weather conditions.⁶⁸

3.66 In order to safeguard the welfare of rodeo animals being transported, the Australian Equine Veterinary Association recommends that the transport of rodeo stock, like other livestock, should be undertaken in accordance with the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Road Transport of Livestock endorsed by the Australian Agricultural Council.

Conclusions

3.67 The evidence of RSPCA (NSW) and the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, that contract stock are well cared for when being transported is in keeping with the Committee's own observations of the loading and unloading of contract stock at rodeos. The Committee was impressed with the professionalism demonstrated during these operations. Furthermore, the Committee detected no signs of stress, trauma or injuries to the stock.

3.68 Nevertheless, 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.

3.69 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.

Yarding

3.70 Injuries to rodeo stock can be minimised if yards and chutes are designed and constructed properly.

3.71 Yards may be wood or steel pipe based constructions. Miss Harmer, an inspector with RSPCA (NSW), told the Committee that wooden yards have advantages. She stated:

They are easy to pull apart if an animal is stuck. I have seen animals stuck, you can cut the wire and the wood. At Grafton rodeo eight years ago, I actually saw a chain saw being used to get a horse out of a yard. In steel yards there is a real problem.⁶⁹

3.72 Miss Harmer, however, added that yards using a combination of wood and steel, if properly constructed, did not pose any particular problems.⁷⁰

3.73 The Australian Professional Rodeo Association maintains that particular attention is given to the design of chutes in order to minimise injuries to animals. The Association advised the Committee that chutes should be small enough to prevent the penned animal from turning around. The walls of the chute should be high enough to discourage an animal from rearing over the sides. The lower section of the chute wall is solid so that the animal cannot get its legs caught. The slatted openings

of the upper walls are also small enough to ensure that the animal's legs are not able to be caught in the wall openings.⁷¹

3.74 During inspections of rodeo facilities at the National Rodeo Championships in Tamworth and at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the Committee observed that the yards were adequate and that the movement of stock through the yards and chutes did not appear to pose any risk of injury to the animals. The Committee also noted that the new portable chutes at the Sydney Showground extend across the racetrack area, obviating the need for stock to traverse this area.

Conclusion

3.75 The Committee recognises that properly designed and constructed yarding facilities and chutes will reduce the incidence of injuries to stock.

Arena Surfaces

3.76 Several contributors to the inquiry noted that the quality of the arena surface is important when considering the welfare of animals in rodeo events.

3.77 Ideally, arena surfaces should be ploughed and worked to a minimum depth of 8 centimetres to provide a softer and more solid footing for rodeo stock.⁷² Surfaces may also be formed from sand or loam. Hard surfaces, such as uncovered trotting tracks or grass surfaces are unsuitable.⁷³ Large arenas, such as showgrounds or sporting grounds, also pose risks for stock because the rodeo area is not usually ploughed. Mr Gill, a member of APRA, told the Committee that a rodeo was cancelled at Harold Park in Sydney because the surface area had not been loosened sufficiently. This posed an unacceptable risk to the welfare of the animals.⁷⁴

3.78 Rain or other adverse weather conditions may also make surfaces unsuitable for rodeo events. This was the case when the Committee inspected the National Championships in Tamworth.

3.79 The Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association and the Australian Professional Rodeo Association, suggested that more attention needs to be given to improving arena surfaces.⁷⁵ Mr Gill of APRA stated:

I would say some of the surfaces are getting too loose. They are starting to put too much sand in them and I have had discussions on that. You can have horses pull a muscle if the sand is too loose.⁷⁶

3.80 The Committee understands that the Rodeo Associations are pursuing these matters. For example, ABCRA is encouraging rodeo committees to reduce the size of the arenas used for rodeos and to ensure that the surfaces are soft.⁷⁷ APRA also provides an advisory service to each of its affiliates, including a complete kit of arena plans and specifications to suit the type of surface used by the respective committees.⁷⁸

Conclusions

3.81 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.

Horses Used in Events other than Bucking

3.82 Horses are ridden by competitors involved in calf roping and steer wrestling. Evidence presented to the Committee by animal welfare organisations indicate that there are fewer animal welfare problems with horses used in these events. RSPCA (NSW) noted that generally the Society "reports few problems with [these] horses... as they are valuable and highly trained animals".⁷⁹ ANZFAS noted that horses involved in these events must be trained to stop on their hocks and rein back on the rope and although these activities are "unnatural movements ... save for the nervous horse, are not as painful as the experiences of the bucking horse".⁸⁰

3.83 Horses are also ridden in ladies events, including barrel racing. This event involves competitors negotiating a series of barrels which are placed around an arena. The Committee viewed this event at the Tamworth rodeo and observed an excessive use of the whip. ANZFAS notes that while this event need not be cruel *per se*, the event often involves excessive spurring and may lead to severe stress on a horse's joints.⁸¹

Conclusions

3.84 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.

Other Animals

3.85 Several rodeo events involve animals other than horses. These include calf roping and steer wrestling. Concerns were expressed during the inquiry about the welfare of animals involved in these events. The Committee addresses these concerns in the following section.

Calf Roping

3.86 The practice of calf roping was criticised consistently during the inquiry. Most animal welfare groups, including those that favoured other rodeo events, expressed strong concerns about calf roping.⁸² Representatives of some organisations, including ANZFAS, RSPCA Australia and RSPCA (NSW) consider that this event should be banned.⁸³ The Committee was advised that since 1989 calf roping has been banned in Rhode Island in the United States and that strict conditions apply to this event in Victoria.⁸⁴

3.87 In evidence to the Committee, ANZFAS stated that calf roping often results in severe injuries to the animals. These injuries include broken legs, general injuries to the neck structure, severe bruising and haemorrhaging. According to the Federation, some of these injuries may result in death or may be so serious the animal has to be destroyed. According to ANZFAS, animals invariably are left in a terrified and distressed state following this event.⁸⁵

3.88 Evidence from the Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, was in general agreement with the views presented by ANZFAS. Dr Gollan, appearing on behalf of AFWA, stated:

I think calf roping is one of the more dangerous events. In some cases it is horrific, with the calf running to the end of the rope and flipping over. Only fools would suggest that the calves enjoy that.⁸⁶

3.89 The Committee was told that the adverse animal welfare aspects of calf roping can be alleviated by roping devices and weight limits on calves. These are discussed below.

Roping Devices

3.90 Jerking down of calves refers to the 180° flipping over of a calf onto its back when roped. Although this practice is prohibited under the rules of the Rodeo Associations⁸⁷ and under the NSW Code of Practice, the Committee was told that the practice still occurs.⁸⁸

3.91 According to the Rodeo Associations, abrupt stopping and jerking down of calves has been reduced or eliminated by the introduction of roping devices. The Committee heard evidence on two devices that are used in calf roping. Mr Button of the Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, described one of the roping devices in the following terms:

It is a metal device and there are two rollers. With calf roping the end of the rope is tied to the horn of the saddle. At least six foot of that rope has to be behind the roller, which is also attached to the horn of the saddle. ... A tension is put on the rollers to suit the horse and also the weight of the calf, so that when the calf is roped and the rope goes out all the slack is pulled through in front of the rollers. It then goes slower like a break.⁸⁹

3.92 Another device used is a round steel device with three bars. The rope is threaded through the bars. This slows the calf down in an action similar to a tension on the reel of a casting rod.⁹⁰

3.93 Evidence suggests that roping devices have improved the welfare of calves involved in the event. For example, Miss Chave of the New South Wales Department of Local Government, observed that the use of roping devices have "improved the situation".⁹¹ Several representatives of Rodeo Associations, including Mr Gill of APRA, also expressed the view that the roping devices are working satisfactorily.⁹²

3.94 Other witnesses, however, expressed reservations about the capacity of roping devices to diminish or eliminate the whiplash effect on calves. Dr Auty, a member of ANZFAS, stated:

The running rope has always been a more gentle method even for roping steers. But it still does not take away from the fact that this is a speed event. The calf is released ... and it takes off as fast as it can go, as calves do, and it is brought to a sudden stop. Whether you reduce that deceleration from BMW-type brakes to Holden-type brakes is inconsequential. The cruelty is still there.⁹³

3.95 Miss Harmer of RSPCA (NSW) expressed a similar view. She advised the Committee that the tension device has "improved calf roping to a degree but it certainly has not eliminated the abrupt stopping of calves".⁹⁴

Weight Limits

3.96 It was also suggested to the Committee that injuries in calf roping events could be avoided if calves of a particular weight are used. Regulations in New South Wales and Victoria prescribe weight limits for calves used in rodeos.

3.97 Currently, in Victoria, all animals, including calves for rodeo events must weigh more than 200 kilograms. In New South Wales, the minimum weight for calves in calf roping events is 100 kilograms. APRA rules also provide for a minimum weight of 90 kilograms.⁹⁵

3.98 The Committee noted comments on the weight limits established by New South Wales. For example, Dr Wirth, President of RSPCA Australia, maintains that the minimum weight in New South Wales is "far too light". He added:

Frankly, there is no body weight you can enact that will stop the cruelty associated with calf roping.⁹⁶

3.99 Miss Harmer, an animal welfare inspector with RSPCA (NSW), told the Committee that calf weights in New South Wales could be "slightly heavier".⁹⁷ She also observed, however, that there are problems associated with using heavy calves for roping events. She explained:

Just the sheer weight of the animals causes bigger problems. They hit the end of the rope a lot harder. It is not only very detrimental to the calves; it is also very detrimental to the

horses. That aside, there is the sheer physics of a calf hitting a rope. Also riders tend to rope bigger calves a lot harder. They have the problem of throwing the calves, so they try to knock as much wind out of them as they can. That is why there is intentional jerking down. This knocks the wind out of the animal. That ceased once jerking down became a real problem.⁹⁸

3.100 If weight is the determining factor for use of calves in roping events, the associated issue of the age of calves becomes relevant. In particular, the Committee was concerned that with some breeds of cattle it may be possible for calves as young as two or three months to meet the minimum weight requirements. These animals could well be more prone to injury because of their less developed bone structure.⁹⁹

3.101 The Committee questioned witnesses whether a minimum age limit should be set for calves used in rodeo events. Some witnesses argued that age is not a practical criteria for protecting the welfare of animals in these events.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, Dr Wirth of RSPCA Australia, observed that it is difficult to determine accurately the age of cattle.¹⁰¹ Miss Harmer of RSPCA (NSW), also suggested that weight is "probably the only criteria" that is practical.¹⁰²

3.102 The Committee received evidence that the current weight limits established in Victoria are adequate and effective. For example, Dr Colin Bassett, President of the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, made the following statement:

At 200 kilos I think they still have got enough age. The thing is, of course, that the riders are not very keen on them because a 200 kilogram animal is pretty hard to stop. An animal with 200 kilos has got a fair bit of momentum and so that gives it the protection.¹⁰³

3.103 Mr Vivers of ABCRA advised the Committee that calves will be more difficult to obtain if weight and age limits are imposed.¹⁰⁴

Conclusions

3.104 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.

3.105 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.

3.106 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.

3.107 The Committee recommends that State and Territory Governments introduce weight limitations, similar to those that apply in Victoria to animals used in rodeos and, in particular, calves.

Reservations

3.108 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.

Steer Wrestling

3.109 Some welfare problems were identified with steer wrestling. ANZFAS argued that because of the nature of this event, steer wrestling should be banned.¹⁰⁵ The Federation argued that cattle used in this event often suffer from broken and splintered horns. In addition, the

twisting of the neck often causes pain and may result in spinal injuries.¹⁰⁶ ANZFAS noted that this event has been banned in Texas because of the danger to the steer.

3.110 Dr Gollan, a member of AFWA, however, argued the experience was not unduly stressful for cattle. He noted:

I think cattle which have been handled a little probably do not enjoy it, but are not unduly upset by it.¹⁰⁷

3.111 Dr Gollan based this view on the animals' behaviour after the event when "virtually all of these animals, after they have been wrestled down, get up and trot away".¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

3.112 Although some animal welfare problems were expressed in relation to steer wrestling, the Committee did not receive sufficient evidence to draw conclusions in regard to this event.

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 157.
2. *ibid.*
3. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 221.
4. *ibid.*, p. 218.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 106.
8. *ibid.*
9. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 217; p. 221.
10. *ibid.*, p. 235.
11. *ibid.*, pp. 236-7.
12. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 106.
13. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 219.
14. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 106.
15. *ibid.*, p. 104.
16. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 20.
17. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, pp. 106-107.
18. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 221.

19. *ibid.*
20. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 174.
21. *ibid.*
22. *ibid.*
23. *ibid.*, p. 159.
24. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 30.
25. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 240.
Evidence, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 381.
Evidence, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 303.
26. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 381.
27. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 303.
28. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, pp. 188-89.
Submission, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 20.
29. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 104.
30. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 159.
31. *Evidence*, New South Wales Department of Local Government, p. 303.
32. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 104.
33. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, pp. 139-140.
34. *ibid.*, p. 140.
35. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 223.

36. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 105.
37. *New South Wales Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events, Clause 3.11.*
38. *Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1986.*
39. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 150.
40. *ibid.*, p. 159.
41. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 224; p. 230.
42. *ibid.*, p. 222.
43. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 21.
44. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 224.
45. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 345.
46. *ibid.*, p. 299.
47. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 381.
48. *ibid.*, pp. 381-2.
49. *New South Wales Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Used in Rodeo Events, Clause 4.18.*
50. *Victorian Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1986.*
51. Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, *Rule Book*, November 1990, p. 36.
Evidence, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 193.
52. Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, *Rule Book*, November 1990, p. 33.
Evidence, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 189.
53. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 158.

54. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 130.
55. *ibid.*
56. Personal communication with the Secretariat, 10 July 1991.
57. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 372.
58. *ibid.*, p. 371.
59. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 382.
60. *ibid.*, p. 399.
61. *ibid.*, p. 381.
62. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, pp. 223-4.
63. *ibid.*, pp. 191-2.
64. *ibid.*
65. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 317.
66. *ibid.*, p. 355.
67. *ibid.*
68. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 160.
69. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 370.
70. *ibid.*
71. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 193.
72. *ibid.*, p. 192.
73. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 30.
74. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 227.
75. *ibid.*
Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, *Rule Book*, November 1990, p. 30.

76. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 227.
77. *Submission*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, (1984), p. 30.
78. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 192.
79. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 323.
80. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 157.
81. *ibid.*, p. 158.
82. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 396.
83. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 150.
Evidence, RSPCA Australia, p. 129.
Evidence, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 351.
84. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 156.
85. *ibid.*
86. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 396.
87. *Evidence*, National Rodeo Association, p. 494.
88. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 302.
89. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 100.
90. *ibid.*
91. *Evidence*, New South Wales Department of Local Government, p. 302.
92. *Evidence*, Australian Professional Rodeo Association, p. 238.
93. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, pp. 175-6.

94. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 352.
95. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 155.
96. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 138.
97. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 353.
98. *ibid.*
99. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 32.
Evidence, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, p. 102.
100. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 353.
101. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 139.
102. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 354.
103. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 32.
104. *Evidence*, Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, pp. 102-3.
105. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 157.
106. *ibid.*
107. *Evidence*, Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, p. 395.
108. *ibid.*, p. 396.

EQUINE WELFARE - EVENTING

CHAPTER 4

EVENTING

Introduction

4.1 Eventing, also known as Horse Trials or Combined Training, comprises three disciplines, namely dressage, cross-country and showjumping.

- *Dressage* requires the horse to demonstrate a series of predetermined movements. A successful partnership of horse and rider will perform the test calmly and with little visible intervention of the rider.
- *Cross-Country* is the most demanding phase, requiring speed, endurance and skilful jumping over fixed obstacles. The cross-country course contains obstacles such as water jumps, drop fences, hedges and other obstacles.
- *Showjumping* is held before or after the cross-country phase and requires calm control to negotiate obstacles. Some horses that have been brought to the peak of fitness to perform cross-country or have just completed the cross-country find this phase exacting and difficult.¹

4.2 Events are classified as One Day Events, Two Day Events and Three Day Events. Three Day Events also include sections on steeplechase and roads and tracks. In all events, the speed, distance and number of obstacles vary according to the level of training of the participating horses and riders. The standards for events range from novice to Olympic and World Championship levels.

4.3 The Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA), is the controlling body for eventing in Australia. EFA adopts the rules of the International Equestrian Federation (Federation Equestre Internationale) for the Olympic disciplines of dressage, showjumping and Three Day Events, as well as national rules to suit local circumstances. Events conducted under the auspices of EFA are controlled by these rules.

4.4 In its submission to the Committee, the Equestrian Federation of Australia summarised its general policy on animal welfare. The Federation stated:

It is considered to be of paramount importance in all equestrian sports that there must be adequate supervision and maintenance of the health and well-being of the horses taking part.²

4.5 Dr Roderic Hoare, Vice President of the New South Wales Horse Trials Council, indicated that the sport of eventing "depends on harmonious partnership between horse and rider".³ He emphasised the need to protect the welfare of the horse. He observed:

The horse has to endure the sport for there is little chance of being successful if the horse is in any way unwilling. A horse which is trained to jump out of fear will be unreliable in competition. Among competitors, there is a quiet peer pressure, an admiration of successful riders and a denigration of horse abuse. The formal sanctions of the sport are rarely required.⁴

4.6 Animal welfare organisations did not identify significant welfare problems with eventing. For example, in its submission to the Committee, RSPCA Australia stated:

RSPCA has no objection in principle to the use of horses in [these] events so long as no action by competitors leads to or causes cruelty during the preparation of the horse and during the course of the running of the event.⁵

4.7 The Australian Equine Veterinary Association did not identify any welfare problems with the dressage phase but maintained that showjumping and cross-country phases are commonly held without a veterinarian in attendance.⁶

4.8 Evidence on eventing received during the inquiry concentrated on Three Day Events. Indeed, some aspects of Three Day Events attracted criticism. Accordingly, the Committee reviews this evidence in the following section of the report.

Three Day Events

4.9 To be eligible to compete in Three Day Events both horse and rider must have competed in at least two official One or Two Day Events or at a Three Day Event. The horse must have competed in at least one such competition in the current or preceding year.⁷

4.10 Three Day Events comprise three separate phases. These are as follows:

- Day One comprising a dressage test of 7½ minutes duration;
- Day Two comprising an endurance competition formally called a speed and endurance test. The four phases of this test involve two roads and tracks phases, a steeplechase phase and a cross-country phase. The roads and tracks phases involve horses trotting and walking around various roads or racetracks. The distance involved is between 7920 and 19800 metres. The steeplechase phase involves distances of between 2240 and 3450 metres and between 6 to 10 obstacles. The cross-country phase involves distances of between 3380 to 7980 metres and between 18 to 32 obstacles; and
- Day Three comprising showjumping. This aims to demonstrate that the horse is still supple and obedient after the exertions of the previous days' events. The distances involved in this event are between 600 and 900 metres involving 10 to 12 obstacles.⁸

4.11 In its submission, the Equestrian Federation noted that the rules governing Three Day Events include the following provisions intended to protect the welfare of horses:

- sampling for prohibited substances may be carried out at any time during the event;
- maximum distances for the phases and maximum numbers and dimensions of obstacles are laid down;

- technical delegates may require amendments to obstacles and action to be taken regarding unsafe ground. Veterinary delegates also have a duty to report to the technical delegates any features which are considered dangerous;
- in the event of more than one fall of a horse and/or rider, the combination is eliminated; and
- veterinary first aid services must be within quick and easy reach of all parts of the course.⁹

4.12 In Australia, detailed reports are submitted to the National Eventing Committee after each Three Day Event. All reports of tired or distressed horses are followed up and appropriate action is taken. Ms Pamela Walker, Secretary-General of the Equestrian Federation of Australia, told the Committee that two cases were reported in 1990. One case involved an inexperienced rider and the other a senior rider who was not permitted to complete the course.¹⁰

4.13 Evidence presented to the Committee during the inquiry was critical of some aspects of Three Day Events. For example, RSPCA (NSW) cited incidents at the Three Day Event held at Gawler, South Australia in 1987 and selection trials in Melbourne in 1990 for the World Games. According to the Society these incidents highlight "the potential for horse welfare problems". At the event in Gawler, a horse collapsed and died. In Melbourne, insufficient time was allowed to assess injuries sustained by horses. Veterinarians were not always in attendance and on some occasions they were competing and thus unavailable to provide emergency treatment if needed.¹¹

4.14 Based on these and other concerns expressed in evidence, the Committee sought clarification of certain aspects of Three Day Events. In particular, the Committee was interested to receive further information on the following:

- jumps;
- steeplechase; and
- veterinary supervision.

These three matters are discussed in the following section.

Jumps

4.15 The Committee questioned whether jumps in the cross-country phase of Three Day Events pose an unacceptable risk to horses and cause injuries.

4.16 Appearing before the Committee at a public hearing, Ms Walker of EFA, explained that jumps are constructed to "look very imposing". She continued:

A person would look at something that has a four or five foot gap in it and say, 'My goodness', but it is well within a horse's stride. So the course designers take quite a lot of pride in designing fences to terrify riders, but they are never intended - and seldom do they - terrify horses.¹²

4.17 Ms Walker added that over the last ten years only two horses have died in cross-country events held in Australia.¹³ However, both the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council, and RSPCA (NSW) recommended that collapsible jumps should be introduced to safeguard the welfare of horses in Three Day Events.¹⁴

4.18 In response to questions from the Committee on the height of jumps in the cross-country phase of eventing, Ms Walker explained that the current height limits are not difficult even for the "most mediocre horses".¹⁵ She noted that often the layout of the course rather than the height of the jumps determines the degree of difficulty.¹⁶

4.19 The Committee also raised questions on the safety of water jumps. Ms Walker assured the Committee that the water jump is "not in any way beyond a horse's ability"¹⁷ and that it is not often that a horse will shy when going into a water jump.¹⁸ According to Ms Walker, the rider rather than the horse comes off "second best" at these jumps.¹⁹

Steeplechase

4.20 The Committee questioned whether the steeplechase phase of the endurance section could be equated with steeplechase events in flat racing. In response, Ms Walker pointed out that there are major differences between the two events. She explained:

Amongst the differences are that our horses are on the course singularly; there is only one horse on the steeplechase course at any one time. They are not racing; they are running within a time allowed. The time allowed for the steeplechase phase varies between 640 metres per minute and 690 metres per minute. I gather that the normal speed that a race horse travels at when it is going over jumps is in the range of 800 to 950 metres per minute, so our horses are going much more slowly. There is a maximum fixed height on our steeplechase obstacles of one metre. So there really is very little parallel between our steeplechase and that of racing.²⁰

Veterinary Supervision

4.21 The rules of Three Day Events provide for two veterinary examinations. An examination take place on the arrival of horses at the stables and aims to establish a horses' identity, veterinary history and state of health. A second examination, conducted at the completion of the cross-country phase is also held and this includes treatment of injured or exhausted horses.²¹

4.22 The Rules also provide for three veterinary inspections. The first inspection is held before the dressage test, the second after the roads and tracks section and the third prior to the showjumping phase. At each of these inspections, an appropriate committee has the "right and the duty" to exclude any horse which is unfit, whether on account of lameness, lack of condition or exhaustion.²²

4.23 At present, veterinarians do not have the authority to exclude a horse from competition. They may only act to prevent a horse from competing by advising the judging panel or Ground Jury as it is known.

4.24 The Equestrian Federation of Australia noted that during the World Equestrian Games in 1990 an open meeting canvassed opinions on changes to the veterinary rules. It is anticipated that new rules for Three Day Events will provide for more direct control of the welfare of horses by veterinarians.²³

4.25 Although not referring specifically to eventing, the Australian Equine Veterinary Association maintains that veterinary officials should have total

control over all matters relating to the health and welfare of horses during equine competitions. Furthermore, veterinarians should be able "to advise elimination of horses at any time during the event and not just at official veterinary examinations".²⁴

Conclusions

4.26 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.

Other Concerns

4.27 Some welfare concerns were raised in a number of submissions and during the course of the inquiry. These concerns relate to:

- course design;
- drugs and drug detection; and
- rider education.

Course Design

4.28 Some evidence presented during the inquiry suggested that course designers construct courses that are hazardous for horses. This is particularly the case with amateur course builders who design courses for One Day Events.

4.29 The Rules of the Federation prescribe maximum heights and spreads of obstacles and specify lengths of courses.²⁵ The Federation also has procedures for the training and accreditation of course designers to ensure that horses are not put at risk in these events.

4.30 Ms Walker told the Committee that the accreditation system is adequate. She explained that the system involves more than the accreditation of course designers. In addition, all branches hold seminars and workshops for course designers, including briefings on the latest overseas developments. She expressed the view that the program of seminars and workshops could be extended.²⁶

4.31 The Committee questioned Ms Walker on problems associated with amateur course builders. She conceded that often inexperienced course designers build the courses for novices and juniors. She observed:

I feel that the most experienced people we have should be building for our starter riders because they are the ones who are in the greatest danger. The inexperienced riders just do not know how to ride something which might be quite straightforward. The only way we can overcome that is by increasing the process of osmosis from the really good experienced people through to the learners to ensure that they are obtaining as much information as possible about the effects of their courses.²⁷

4.32 The Australian Equine Veterinary Association raised with the Committee one general matter relating to course design in equine events. The Association maintains that ground conditions and prevailing climatic circumstances should be taken into account when courses are designed. Adverse conditions, such as high temperatures and humidity, may compromise the welfare of horses and organisers should be prepared to amend courses or completion times. If warranted, organisers should also be prepared to cancel events.²⁸ The Association recommends that organisers seek veterinary advice on the suitability of courses.²⁹ RSPCA (NSW) also noted that events should not be held when visibility is inadequate or the ground surface unsafe.³⁰

Conclusions

4.33 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.

4.34 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.

Drugs and Drug Detection

4.35 EFA Rules prohibit the use of performance enhancing drugs before or during an event.

4.36 Substances that cannot be used include:

- substances which act on the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, alimentary, urinary, musculoskeletal and immune systems;
- antibiotics, antibacterial and antiviral substances;
- antiparasitic substances;
- anti-pyretics, analgesics and anti-inflammatory substances other than phenylbutazone and oxphenbutazone (for which there is an allowable concentration of 2 micro-grams per millilitre of plasma);
- endocrine secretions and their synthetic counterparts;
- substances affecting blood coagulation; and
- cytotoxic substances.³¹

4.37 The Australian Equine Veterinary Association also supports the prohibition of drugs that influence the performance of horses during competition.³²

Drug Detection Procedures

4.38 Random drug testing is carried out at many events in all disciplines. Samples are tested at laboratories accredited by the International Equestrian Federation. Ms Walker explained the policy of the Equestrian Federation of Australia on random drug testing in the following terms:

We have been swabbing for many years and the policy has been that you swab the placegetters. You tend always then to get the same people and we know the people who are always clean because if they have been swabbed 15 times and they have always come up clear, there is not a lot of point in swabbing them for the fifteenth to twenty-sixth time.

A lot of our branches are doing far more random testing. Sure, they still do one of the placegetters but they might pick someone who came twenty-fifth just for the sake of the exercise. The veterinarians have always got the right to say, 'I want that horse', if there is one that is looking, in the vet's opinion, different from how he should look.³³

4.39 Ms Walker noted that the main problem facing the Federation is the cost of drug testing procedures. Currently, it costs between \$60 and \$300 per swab, depending on whether the test is for a specific drug or a broad spectrum of drugs.³⁴

4.40 The AEVA endorses the random testing of horses at these events but recognises that economic constraints may confine drug testing to major competitions.³⁵

Penalties

4.41 A rider may be disqualified from an event if a prohibited drug is used on the competing horse. Any subsequent penalty is discretionary, depending on the intent of the competitor and the severity of the offence.³⁶

4.42 The Committee questioned the Federation as to whether the penalties for drug abuse are severe enough to prevent cheating. Ms Walker argued that the penalties are a sufficient deterrent. She elaborated in the following terms:

One of the things in the hack world and the dressage world which causes riders the greatest distress is the publication of the finding [of drug abuse]. We found that is almost more abhorrent to them than any other penalty we can offer. I have had a number of people say to me, 'I will pay the fine, I will not compete, but do not publish it'. It is our policy that all such penalties are published.³⁷

Use of Prohibited Drugs

4.43 The Committee received anecdotal evidence that prohibited drugs are used in equine events.³⁸ For example, Ms Walker told the Committee that rumours about drug use are rife in the hacking and

dressage competitions, but less so in eventing and showjumping. She observed that these rumours are usually "stable talk" and are not based on knowledge or facts. She assured the Committee that the "vast majority of competitors do not use [prohibited] drugs" on their horses.³⁹ According to Ms Walker, most competitors believe that their reputations would be irreparably damaged by the publication of a finding of use of a prohibited drug.⁴⁰ Ms Walker, however, conceded that not every horse that competes is drug free.⁴¹

4.44 The Committee understands that the policy of the Equestrian Federation of Australia is to discourage drug use. Ms Walker explained that the aim of the Federation "is not necessarily to catch people using drugs [but rather] to stop people using drugs".⁴² According to evidence presented during the inquiry only a few cases of prohibited drug use have been reported. The Committee was told that two cases, involving the use of phenylbutazone, were reported in New South Wales. In both cases, the rider was disqualified from the event.⁴³ In addition, a showjumping rider in New South Wales was suspended for six months after the competing horse returned a positive swab.⁴⁴

4.45 As an indication of compliance with rules relating to drug use, it was drawn to the Committee's attention that all horses swabbed in South Australia in 1990 returned a negative result.⁴⁵

Permissible drugs

4.46 The Committee sought clarification of the Federation's policy on the use of permissible drugs. For example, an allowable limit of 2 micrograms per millilitre of plasma is established for phenylbutazone, an anti-inflammatory drug. Ms Walker likened the allowable limit of phenylbutazone to the use of aspirins for a headache for human use.⁴⁶ She, however, expressed the view that a zero level would be preferable.

4.47 Other substances, such as theobromine, salicylic acid and arsenic, also have allowable limits.⁴⁷ Ms Walker explained to the Committee the reasons for establishing allowable limits on these drugs. She stated:

They are found in prepared feed mixes. It is not really an issue here in Australia because we do not feed a lot of that prepared stuff, but in Europe, where they do not have access to good lucerne hay and so forth as we have here they use

a lot more of the prepared foodstuffs, and those three I mentioned do occur in traces in those prepared foodstuffs.⁴⁸

4.48 Ms Walker conceded that it is difficult to police an allowable level. She added:

The level is such now that most of our competitors say that there is no way they could give their horse a sachet of bute the night before and not be swabbable. I am told by competitors that bute, phenylbutazone, is virtually not used in eventing and show jumping now because it is just not worth it - even the therapeutic dose which they used to consider was acceptable.⁴⁹

Conclusions

4.49 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.

Rider Education

4.50 Evidence from several organisations, including RSPCA (NSW), NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council and the Equestrian Federation of Australia, suggests that the education of riders can be improved.⁵⁰ In particular, it was noted that education programs for competitors should place more emphasis on the need to improve the fitness of horses.

4.51 Ms Walker told the Committee that not enough is being done in Australia to enhance rider education. She explained:

Traditionally, most of our riders have come through the pony club system and the pony club has a very great deal to give but, as with all things, some pony clubs are better than others

and some concentrate on horsemanship whereas others would concentrate on fun and games.⁵¹

Conclusions

4.52 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.

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, New South Wales Horse Trials Council, p. 612.
2. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 424.
3. *Evidence*, New South Wales Horse Trials Council, p. 615.
4. *ibid.*
5. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 127.
6. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 4.
7. Equestrian Federation of Australia, *Rules for Official Horse Trials*, January 1989, p. 41.
8. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 443.
9. *ibid.*, p. 426.
10. *ibid.*, p. 449.
11. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 331.
12. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 446.
13. *ibid.*
14. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 332.
Evidence, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 275.
15. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 441.
16. *ibid.*
17. *ibid.*, p. 448.
18. *ibid.*, p. 447.
19. *ibid.*, p. 448.
20. *ibid.*, p. 444.

21. Federation Equestre Internationale, *Veterinary Regulations*, Sixth Edition, Switzerland, 1990, pp. 144-46.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 144-48.
23. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 426.
24. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 9.
25. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 425.
26. *ibid.*, p. 441.
27. *ibid.*
28. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 10.
29. *ibid.*
30. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 332.
31. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 425.
32. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 9.
33. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 433.
34. *ibid.*
35. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 9.
36. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 440.
37. *ibid.*, p. 438.
38. *ibid.*, p. 433.
39. *ibid.*, p. 438.
40. *ibid.*
41. *ibid.*, p. 433.
42. *ibid.*, p. 434.
43. *ibid.*, p. 436.

44. *ibid.*, p. 437.
45. *ibid.*
46. *ibid.*, p. 435.
47. *ibid.*
48. *ibid.*
49. *ibid.*, p. 436.
50. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 332.
Evidence, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council,
p. 275.
Evidence, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 452.
51. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 452.

EQUINE WELFARE - ENDURANCE RIDING

CHAPTER 5

ENDURANCE RIDING

Introduction

5.1 Endurance riding is a competitive horse ride of at least 80 kilometres where the winner is the horse and rider that successfully completes the ride in the shortest time.¹

5.2 The Australian Endurance Riders Association (AERA) was formed in 1967 and has established Riding Rules and Veterinary Standards for the conduct of endurance rides. In 1981, State divisions were formed to manage the sport in each State with AERA having overall co-ordinating control. The membership of AERA totals 2,500 nationally². The sport is most popular in New South Wales and Queensland.³

5.3 Currently, there are over 5,000 horses involved in endurance rides. The competitive life of endurance horses varies from three to ten years, but horses do not commence competition before the age of 6. Some horses may continue in competition until they are 16 years of age. No whips or spurs are permitted during endurance rides.

5.4 AERA told the Committee that endurance riding is conducted under stringent veterinary and other rules. The Association stated that the Riding Rules, Procedures for Rides and Veterinary Standards are "constantly being updated", with the "main criteria" being the "welfare of the horse".⁴

5.5 The Rules of the Association emphasise the welfare of the competing horse. All endurance rides are under the control of a veterinarian. Any decision by the veterinarian on the fitness of a horse to compete or continue competing is final.

5.6 Veterinarians examine all competing horses before the ride commences. The horses must be properly shod, in good health and free of lameness before they are allowed to compete. During the ride, there are a number of compulsory stops for the veterinarian to re-examine the horses. At the first inspection point, the veterinarian examines the horses 30 minutes after they cross the line. The veterinarian will eliminate from further competition horses with heart rates above 55 beats per minute

(BPM) or horses that appear lame at the trot. At all subsequent inspection points, heart rates must be below 60 BPM and the horse must not exhibit any signs of lameness.

5.7 Dr Christopher Pollitt, Senior Lecturer, Department of Companion Animal Medicine and Surgery, University of Queensland, explained the overriding philosophy behind the rules relating to veterinary supervision. He stated:

The veterinary surgeon's primary responsibility is to protect the health and welfare of the endurance horse and he is made to realise that that is his reason for being there ... What the veterinary surgeon does is to consider this fundamental welfare tenet at all times during an endurance ride: Is the horse fit to continue in the endurance ride without compromise to its welfare?⁵

5.8 Dr Pollitt indicated that the goal of the endurance rider is to complete the ride and "the motto of endurance riding is 'To complete is to win'".⁶ He added:

Endurance riding is the only horse sport in Australia, or even the world, where a competitor, even after crossing the finishing line, is eliminated if the horse has not passed the [veterinary] criteria.⁷

Views on Endurance Rides

5.9 In general, animal welfare organisations did not identify major problems associated with endurance riding. For example, RSPCA Australia advised the Committee that it "is not opposed in principle to the conduct of Endurance Rides when carried out under strictly supervised conditions".⁸ The Society considers that the following conditions are necessary:

- that only suitable, trained and fit horses should be allowed to compete;
- experienced veterinary surgeons are engaged to examine all horses entered immediately prior to their acceptance and to regularly monitor each horse throughout the event. Such

veterinary examinations should be conducted strictly in accordance with published criteria set by the Australian Equine Veterinary Association; and

- no competitor should permit a horse to be exposed to unnecessary or excessive stress.⁹

5.10 RSPCA (NSW) cautioned that endurance riding has the "potential to cause serious welfare problems as it effectively pushes horses to their physical limits". The State Branch, however, indicated that it condones these events subject to the controls laid down by RSPCA Australia.¹⁰

5.11 ANZFAS did not address specifically the issue of endurance riding. In evidence to the Committee, however, Dr John Auty, a member of the Federation, made the following general observation:

I would say, having had discussions with veterinary colleagues about this, that those [endurance riding] events are probably the best conducted competitive horse events of all, because they have got a very big veterinary input; the training has to be over such a period, extended training; the animals are mature; and so on and so forth.¹¹

Equine Fatalities

5.12 The Committee was surprised that submissions and other evidence did not address the issue of fatalities in endurance riding. Indeed, it was only after questioning from the Committee that this important matter was raised.

5.13 In response to questions from the Committee, the Australian Endurance Riders Association commented that in Australia over the last fifteen years, 25 horses have died in endurance rides.¹² Nine of these deaths occurred in 1990.¹³ According to the Association's evidence, 40 per cent of the deaths were caused by "exhausted horse syndrome". Representatives of the Association agreed with the proposition that these deaths were caused primarily by the abuse of horses by riders.¹⁴ Twenty-five per cent of deaths resulted from broken legs or other injuries, 25 per cent from worm damage and 10 per cent were unknown.¹⁵

5.14 Subsequent information requested by the Committee from the Association indicated that 34 horse deaths have occurred nationally since 1976. Of these, 24 occurred in New South Wales, 4 each in Queensland and Victoria and one each in South Australia and Tasmania. No deaths have been recorded in Western Australia.¹⁶

5.15 The Committee also questioned the Association on whether death rates are increasing because rides are too difficult. Mr John Innes, National President of AERA, replied:

We are not making the rides harder. We are making the completion criteria harder, but not the rides. It is harder for that horse to get through by the criteria of the completion, but not the ride. The rides are exactly the same. We are just making it harder for the horses to get through.¹⁷

Conclusions

5.16 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.

5.17 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.

5.18 In the following sections of this chapter, the Committee draws conclusions about specific reforms to endurance riding that may improve the welfare of the horses involved in this event.

Reducing Equine Fatalities

5.19 During public hearings, the Committee questioned witnesses on ways in which the welfare of horses in endurance rides might be improved. The matters raised at these hearings relate to:

- novice and unfit horses;
- training rides;
- rider education;
- cardiac recovery index (CRI); and
- veterinary supervision.

Novice and Unfit Horses

5.20 The Committee questioned representatives of the Australian Endurance Riders Association on possible reasons for the significant increase in the number of deaths in endurance riding. Dr Christopher Walker, Honorary Veterinarian with the Association, replied that novice horses are at most risk. Dr Walker explained:

In addressing this problem, we have been able to identify the horses that are dying are not the elite horses. [The elite horses] are not our concern. Nor are they the horses at the tail of the field that are just going around trail riding. It appears [that] the horses at risk are the novice horses, new to the sport who have not demonstrated capacity to be an endurance horse, ridden by experienced riders - in other words, riders who do not have to ride behind the pace rider ... Those novice horses seem to be the group that we are having problems with.¹⁸

5.21 The Committee also raised the related issue of unfit horses competing in endurance rides. The Committee noted that the completion rate for endurance rides is about 65 per cent.¹⁹ The Committee questioned whether this indicated that horses are not fit enough to compete or that they are not ridden properly.

5.22 Mr Innes, National President of AERA, conceded that this view was in part correct. He noted:

As far as the 65 per cent goes, you are partially correct in that some of the horses are not fit enough. That is the whole reason we have a very strict veterinary control.²⁰

5.23 Mr George Sample, National Delegate to the Association, told the Committee that completion rates are satisfactory. He explained:

I would like to emphasise that our standards are designed in order to detect the horses before they run into trouble - not to eliminate the horses that are in trouble, but to eliminate the ones before they run into trouble. I think that is why you will find that a 65 per cent finishing, completion rate - it might sound low - to us is quite high, because those standards are designed to eliminate the horse before it runs into physiological problems.²¹

5.24 Representatives of the Association suggested that there are several reasons why horses do not complete rides. These include withdrawals and elimination, or "vet-outs" as they are called, on account of lameness or excessive pulse rate.²²

5.25 In relation to lameness, Mr Innes noted that it is the major cause of vet-outs. According to Mr Innes, the incidence of lameness has "nothing to do with fit horses or bad riding".²³ Dr Walker advised that most cases of lameness are "significant" and are usually caused by a kick or fall. Most horses, however, recover quickly and are able to compete again in 2 or 3 weeks.²⁴

5.26 In relation to elimination because of excessive pulse rate, Mr Innes advised that the incidence of "pulse vet-outs" is decreasing. He suggested that this trend indicates that horses are fitter.²⁵

Conclusions

5.27 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.

Training Rides

5.28 Training rides are conducted over distances ranging from 40 to 60 kilometres and are governed by the Rules of the Endurance Riders Association. Veterinary procedures for training rides are more stringent than normal competitions. A horses' heart rate must be below 55 beats per minute at all veterinary checks.

5.29 The Association conducts short training rides under tight veterinary regulation to initiate new riders and juniors into the sport. Dr Pollitt explained:

Competitors are encouraged just to get their horses through these training rides in a comfortable state. They are not encouraged to compete against each other.²⁶

5.30 Dr William Harbison, an honorary veterinarian with the Association, also maintains that these rides play an important role in educating new riders as riders gain valuable experience seeing more experienced people in action. Dr Harbison advised the Committee that in 1990, AERA widened its rules to cover short rides. It also has developed a specific set of rules to address these types of rides.

5.31 Some animal welfare organisations suggested that there are problems with short endurance rides. For example, the New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council noted that these rides tend to attract more unfit horses and inexperienced riders.²⁷

Conclusions

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

5.33 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.

5.34 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.

Rider Education

5.35 AERA conducts educational promotions to raise the level of rider education. Dr Pollitt advised the Committee of the Association's activities in this area. He stated:

We have a bi-monthly newsletter that goes out to all the members of the Association and we conduct seminars to raise the awareness of riders and veterinarians about how their horses perform, the reasons for high heart rates and the reasons for metabolic stress with the aim of helping people to keep their horses working and competing in the sport in the most comfortable manner possible.²⁸

5.36 Some contributors to the inquiry, including NSW AWAC and Dr Harbison maintain that more needs to be done to promote rider education.²⁹ This education process should familiarise riders with problems that may occur during rides, including the risk of injuries and measures to reduce these risks.

5.37 Dr Harbison expressed the view that there has been a recent increase in the competitiveness of riders. He observed that " the achievement of completion has been less important, and winning the ride, that is, being first across the line is the sought after goal".³⁰ This was another reason to stress the importance of rider education.

5.38 The Committee received practical suggestions on ways to improve the skills and approach of riders. For example, the NSW AWAC suggests that organising committees provide riders, particularly those with limited experience, with a guide on minimum completion times for the course or sections of the course.³¹ NSW AWAC also considers that riders should be required to declare that they " are in possession of, and familiar with AERA rules".³²

Conclusions

5.39 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.

5.40 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.

Cardiac Recovery Index

5.41 The Committee was told that the Association has developed an Early Warning System that collates and monitors the riding performance of all competitors at all rides throughout the country. The system is designed to highlight competitors eliminated frequently and the incidence of horse stress not resulting in death or serious injuries. Officiating committees may penalise competitors who are proven to override or stress their horses. Penalties include counselling, demotion to novice status and disqualification.³³

5.42 Dr Pollitt advised the Committee that equine deaths could be reduced if an improved stress test, called the Cardiac Recovery Index, were used in Australia. This test is mandatory at all international endurance rides and is used extensively at endurance rides in North America. According to Dr Pollitt, veterinary surgeons incorporating the CRI into their examination procedures are confident that they can detect "undue" stress with more sensitivity.³⁴

5.43 Dr Pollitt explained to the Committee how the test works. He stated:

In Australia we wait 30 minutes before the veterinarians examine the horses; then their heart rates are taken. If the heart rates are below 55 at the first check and then 60 at the second and subsequent checks, the horses are considered unstressed. Then the horses are examined for lameness. The cardiac recovery index is used in Europe and America... There the horses have to be below 64 beats per minute

throughout the ride, ... But then, when the index is applied, the heart rate is taken, the horse is trotted out 60 metres and back and then the heart rate is taken again; there is a wait of one minute; if the heart rate rises, the horse is considered stressed and could be eliminated. If the recovery index is as high or higher at subsequent checks, the horse is eliminated.³⁵

5.44 Dr Pollitt explained that tests currently used in Australia detect lameness more effectively but the CRI is more sensitive to metabolic stress. He conceded that horse deaths are a major problem in Australia and made the following observation:

We might have to concentrate more on the metabolic aspects, and live with the lameness aspects, if we are going to do something about deaths".³⁶

5.45 Mr Sample, also appearing on behalf of AERA, suggested that a combination of tests may be necessary. He stated:

We believe quite strongly that our method of checking the horse after it has been half an hour into the vet check produces a result that was the best one for Australia. We are now looking at the possibility of combining the cardiac recovery index with our half-hour vet check to see if we can further improve the standards that we have".³⁷

Conclusion

5.46 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.

Veterinary Supervision

5.47 As indicated previously, all endurance rides are under the control of a veterinarian whose decision on the fitness of a horse to compete is final.

5.48 RSPCA Australia advised the Committee that the veterinary parameters for endurance rides are "adequate". However, the Society noted that the welfare of competing horses could be compromised if veterinary surveillance is not strict and meticulous.³⁸

5.49 RSPCA (NSW) also supports veterinarian checks as a means of detecting and treating problems as they may arise.³⁹ Likewise, NSW AWAC favour these veterinarian procedures.⁴⁰

5.50 It was suggested to the Committee that some veterinarians officiating at events are not familiar with endurance riding.⁴¹

5.51 Dr Walker, Honorary Veterinarian with AERA, recognised this problem but assured the Committee that the situation has improved in recent years. Dr Walker added:

I think it was harder to get veterinarians in the years gone by and often they relied upon the University of Sydney or the University of Queensland to provide their clinical staff and students accompanying them. Nowadays the local equine or mixed practice tends to service the local endurance ride and it is done on a professional paid basis. That has done a lot to encourage veterinarians to come forward.⁴²

5.52 In written responses to Committee questions, Dr Harbison, an honorary veterinarian with the Association, recognised that "some of the recent ride fatalities may have been in part due to inexperience on the part of the veterinarian".⁴³

5.53 Dr Harbison noted that in the past the position of supervising veterinarians at endurance rides has "been largely honorary".⁴⁴ He welcomed the recent trend towards paying for services and added that if reasonable fees are paid "reasonable service" can be expected.

5.54 Dr Harbison suggested that the increase in deaths at rides could be attributed to recent reductions in veterinary supervision. He explained:

There has been pressure from within the endurance riding fraternity to bring our rules into line with other countries and to allow Australian competitors to get used to the rules under which they would ride in international competition. Not all

people involved agreed with this trend as they felt that our recent good record was due to the very tight veterinary control.⁴⁵

5.55 To assist veterinarians at endurance rides, NSW AWAC suggests that riders should be required to carry a book containing details of every ride attempted. Information contained in the book could include the age and description of the horse, resting and recovery heart rate, ride distance and reason for any disqualifications. Details could be completed and signed by the supervising veterinarian at each ride. According to NSW AWAC, this information would assist veterinarians in the early recognition of potential problems.⁴⁶

Conclusions

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

5.57 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.

Statistics on Fatalities

5.58 The Committee notes that the Australian Endurance Riders Association has instituted a recording and investigation procedure to monitor fatalities in rides. Thorough investigations are conducted, including post-mortems and reports from supervising veterinarians and ride stewards. If necessary, this information is investigated by the relevant State association and referred on to the national body.

Conclusions

5.59 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.

5.60 *The Committee recommends 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.*

Research

5.61 Several contributors to the inquiry stressed the need for further research into endurance riding.⁴⁷ For example, Dr Pollitt informed the Committee that currently the School of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland is undertaking research into the exercise physiology of endurance horses.⁴⁸ This research aims to define the attributes of successful competitive endurance horses. Dr Pollitt noted:

The results are expected to identify the characteristics of those horses which regularly fail to pass the veterinary criteria at endurance rides and prevent them being subjected to the stress of futile further training. This research is under funded and deserves a higher priority than it currently receives.⁴⁹

5.62 Mr Sample, a member of the Australian Endurance Riders Association, indicated that further research needs to be done on horses in sport. He observed:

We look for more research than has been the case in the past because we acknowledge endurance riding to be a very special field of equine sport endeavour. Without research we cannot continue to make the progress that has been made in the past. We would like to see more progress made.⁵⁰

5.63 Dr Harbison noted that the medical problems of horses competing in endurance rides are different from those associated with other equine sports. Dr Harbison identified specific areas requiring more research. These include exercise physiology, the diagnosis of "exhausted horse syndrome" and appropriate treatments for emergency situations.⁵¹

Other Issues

5.64 Two other issues relating to animal welfare were raised in evidence during the course of the inquiry on endurance riding. These issues relate to de-nerved horses and the use of prohibited drugs.

De-nerved Horses

5.65 Neurectomised horses have had nerves removed from hooves and legs with the resulting loss of sensation. The Committee was advised of at least one instance when a "de-nerved" horse participated in an endurance ride. In this case, the horse was banned from competing in endurance rides. However, no action was taken against the rider.⁵²

5.66 Dr Pollitt, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland, informed the Committee that the welfare of de-nerved horses is threatened as many parts of its foot are numb. This loss of sensation may cause injuries or exacerbate pre-existing conditions. In relation to endurance riding, a de-nerved horse, without a warning signal of pain, will continue to perform.

5.67 The Committee understands that the Australian Endurance Riders Association is considering placing a ban on horses that have been de-nerved.⁵³ The Committee supports a ban on neurectomised horses from participating in endurance rides.

Drug Use

5.68 The rules of the Australian Endurance Riders Association prohibit the use of certain drugs.⁵⁴

5.69 The Association is authorised to ban riders from competition for up to twelve months if their horses are found to have competed under the influence of prohibited substances. Urine and blood swabs are collected at major endurance rides. All riders must submit their horses for a drug test or risk suspension.⁵⁵

5.70 Representatives of the Endurance Riders Association assured the Committee that there were no major problems with the use of prohibited drugs in endurance riding.⁵⁶

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p.573.
2. *ibid.*, p. 584; p. 590.
3. *ibid.*, p. 593.
4. *ibid.* p. 548.
5. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, pp. 528-29.
6. *ibid.*, p. 534.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 533-4.
8. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p 128.
9. *ibid.*, pp. 128-9.
10. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, pp. 329-30.
11. *Evidence*, Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, p. 180.
12. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 596.
13. *ibid.*, pp. 596-7.
14. *ibid.*, p. 596.
15. *ibid.*
16. *Correspondence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, 24 July 1991, pp. 1-2; p. 7.
17. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, pp. 603-4.
18. *ibid.*, p. 598.
19. *ibid.*, p. 601.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*, p. 603.

22. *ibid.*, p. 602.
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.*
25. *ibid.*
26. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, p. 534.
27. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 271.
28. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, pp. 535-6.
29. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 273.
Correspondence, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 8.
30. *Correspondence*, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 8.
31. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 273.
32. *ibid.*, p. 273.
33. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 548.
Correspondence, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 5.
34. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, p. 513.
35. *ibid.*, pp. 541-2.
36. *ibid.*, p. 542.
37. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 586.
38. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 128.
39. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 331.
40. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 272.
41. *Correspondence*, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 6.

- Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, p. 272.
42. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 600.
 43. *Correspondence*, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 6.
 44. *ibid.*, p. 6.
 45. *ibid.*, p. 4.
 46. *Evidence*, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council, pp. 272-3.
 47. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 586.
Evidence, Dr C. Pollitt, p. 513.
 48. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, pp. 512-3.
 49. *ibid.*
 50. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, pp. 586-7.
 51. *Correspondence*, Dr W. Harbison, 15 May 1991, p. 6.
 52. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, pp. 537-8.
 53. *Evidence*, Australian Endurance Riders Association, p. 537.
 54. *ibid.*, p. 554.
 55. *Evidence*, Dr C. Pollitt, p. 512.
 56. *ibid.*

EQUINE WELFARE - SHOW EVENTS

CHAPTER 6

SHOW EVENTS

Introduction

6.1 Show societies provide a venue for the conduct of many competitive equine events. These events include led stud classes, hack and riding events, showjumping and, to a lesser extent, dressage, rodeo and campdrafting competitions.

6.2 All exhibitors of animals involved with competition, display or demonstration are subject to the rules and regulations of their respective governing bodies. For example, showjumping and dressage events at shows are governed by the rules of the Equestrian Federation of Australia, rodeo and campdrafting by the rules of the Rodeo Associations and hack-riding, harness classes and led-classes by the regulations of their respective governing bodies.¹

Views on Shows

6.3 The Committee is in agreement with the views expressed by both animal welfare organisations and show societies that there are no major animal welfare problems with equine events at shows.

6.4 For example, the show societies argue that they maintain a high level of supervision and control to ensure that animal welfare concerns are adequately addressed. The Royal National Capital Agricultural Society (RNCAS), argued that "no extra controls are considered necessary to maintain the existing level of animal welfare".² The Society noted:

From general experience in the conduct of Agricultural Shows, and observation by Officers of the RNCAS, it can be stated that animals presented during the Royal Canberra Show are the healthiest, most cared for and contented animals that can be found.³

6.5 The animal welfare organisations also did not raise major animal welfare issues in relation to the conduct of equine events at shows. RSPCA Australia stated that the Society has "no objection in principle" to

the use of horses in such events as long as no action by competitors led to instances of cruelty.⁴

6.6 Reflecting the general views of animal welfare organisations, RSPCA (NSW) stated:

The RSPCA has no first-hand experience of regularly occurring animal welfare problems with horses at shows.⁵

Animal Welfare Concerns

6.7 While the Committee accepts the views noted above, it considers that the evidence on some animal welfare matters should be reviewed briefly for the public record. These relate to drug use, showjumping, the enforcement of animal welfare rules and the use of chains on horses.

Drug Use

6.8 The Committee received some evidence that prohibited drugs are used at shows. Mr Samuel Johnston, Committee Member of the Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, stated:

I would be naive, having spent a lifetime in the show industry and in rings as a ringmaster, if I said that drugs are not being used. As a layman you can see them but you cannot do anything about them.⁶

6.9 Dr Hugh Wirth, President of RSPCA Australia, explained that in the past the high level of prohibited drug use at shows was a "scandal".⁷ He noted that when the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria first started drug testing there were many positive swabs.⁸

6.10 The Committee was told the main drugs used at shows are tranquillisers and performance enhancing drugs.⁹

Drug Testing

6.11 Mr Hugh Duncan, Chief Executive Officer of the Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, told the Committee that his Society does not test extensively for drugs. He noted:

We do it on an ad hoc basis, and with the two or three tests that we have done over the shows we have not shown up anything. But we are well aware that drugs are used in the horse world.¹⁰

6.12 The Agricultural Societies Council of NSW stated that it is attempting to discourage prohibited drug use by a program of random testing or swabbing. This is being implemented through show groups in the State.¹¹

6.13 Mr Johnston of the Agricultural Societies Council noted that the high cost of swabbing is a problem for show societies. He commented that the Council is looking at ways to best implement the drug testing policy at local shows. He stated:

Again, our problem is that we are dealing with show societies running in a town of a population of 300 to 500, and 70 per cent of our shows have a gate of under 10,000. So you are looking at a lot of horses appearing at a place where there is a lack of capital organisation.¹²

6.14 Mr Duncan noted that an additional problem associated with drug testing is the legal situation. He explained:

One of the problems that has bugged both Sydney and Melbourne is the legal side. They have been sued on a number of occasions. They have volunteered, on all of the Royals' behalf, to research ways to tighten this side of it up. We are conscious of it, and we aim to stop it; it is just a matter of now ensuring that the societies do not find themselves in a legal hassle.¹³

6.15 Dr Wirth of RSPCA Australia told the Committee that where drug testing programs are undertaken they are effective. He cited as an example the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria's success in its drug testing program. He explained:

We had three prosecutions in the 1989 show that were very successfully upheld, and last year we tested over 80 horses and we got only a trace of a 'probable', which we could never prove what it was. Only one tested that way out of 80 horses.

That meant that in all those arena events at that Royal Agricultural Show, as far as we were concerned, the horses were competing on their merits.¹⁴

Banning of Competitors

6.16 The Committee received evidence from the Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales that the Society does not have the authority to ban competitors on a State-wide basis for using prohibited substances.

6.17 Mr Johnston conceded that the system was "inefficient".¹⁵ He added:

I agree this is a major problem within our system at this stage. Years ago it was not. Twenty years ago if we banned a competitor on, for argument's sake, Conoble Showground, we then informed the local group and informed the neighbouring shows, if we felt it serious enough. We gave the other shows the option of banning that competitor. If we felt it was serious enough, we then brought it back to the Agricultural Societies Council.¹⁶

6.18 Mr Johnston noted that show societies need legal authority to enforce their rulings in this regard.¹⁷

Conclusions

6.19 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.

Showjumping

6.20 Showjumping at agricultural shows is governed by the Equestrian Federation of Australia through the area steward scheme. Under this

scheme EFA officials are present at official events. These officials assist the show societies in the running of the events, watch for any maltreatment of horses and either report or charge offenders through EFA. Most show societies also use EFA recommended judges and course designers.

6.21 The Committee questioned several witnesses about the construction of showjumping courses.

6.22 Mr Johnston of the Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales told the Committee that course builders construct courses in a proper and professional manner and while the style of course may vary, its object is to test the horse in a proper way without endangering its welfare.¹⁸ Mr Johnston also told the Committee that events are cancelled if weather or other conditions are considered unsafe for the horses.¹⁹

6.23 Mr Duncan of the Royal National Capital Agricultural Society also noted that "with the updating of jumps, there is very little cruelty if a jump is knocked down".²⁰ He noted that the Society had recently installed collapsible-type jumps, designed so that if knocked down they fall flat. The jumps also have no projections that can injure a horse.²¹ He also told the Committee that there had been no reported injuries in showjumping events at the Royal Canberra Show in all the time he had been Director.²²

Rapping and other Practices

6.24 The Committee directed questions to witnesses on rapping, hypersensitisation and other unacceptable practices.

6.25 Rapping refers to the use of certain artificial techniques to induce a horse to jump higher or more carefully. Rapping may involve practices such as hitting the legs of a horse manually or by deliberately causing the horse to hit objects such as fences that have been built too large or too wide.²³

6.26 Dr Patricia Ellis, appearing on behalf of the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, elaborated on the practices involved in rapping in the following terms:

It is used in showjumping to obtain better performance out of horses and it can involve a variety of methods basically designed to inflict pain on the horse as it goes over the jump to lift its legs higher and not knock jumps in the future. It can be a light cane held in front of the jump; it can be a metal bar; it can even have spikes on it. Sometimes it is held by two people and deliberately lifted as the animal approaches the jump.²⁴

6.27 Dr Ellis confirmed that rapping may also involve putting sharp objects under the leg bandages of a horse in order to condition it to jump higher. This practice is also known as hypersensitisation. The Committee also understands that other unacceptable practices include the application of creams that will burn. Ms Pamela Walker, Secretary-General of the Equestrian Federation of Australia, told the Committee that this has occurred in Australia and that procedures have been established to discourage the practice. She stated:

As part of the veterinary inspection for top level show jumping competitions they actually make them take the bandages off so that they can ensure that there is nothing underneath the bandages.²⁵

6.28 The Rules of the Federation prohibit the practice of rapping. In a case of rapping, the competitor and the horse concerned is "disqualified from all competition for the succeeding 24 hours". Authorities may also take further action if deemed appropriate to the particular circumstances.²⁶

6.29 According to the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, the practice of rapping is not widespread in Australia.²⁷ Ms Walker, representing the Equestrian Federation, confirmed that there were few reported cases of rapping in this country.²⁸

6.30 Witnesses, however, conceded that these practices may be used in training where it is difficult to detect and prevent.²⁹ Ms Walker indicated that the Equestrian Federation of Australia only has jurisdiction over competitors on showgrounds and that it is impossible to legislate against what people do on their private properties.

6.31 Dr Colin Basset, President of AEVA, expressed a similar view. He told the Committee that if these practices occur during training all that can be done is to "educate the industry" that they are unacceptable.³⁰ Ms Walker stressed that only a "small percentage" are involved in these unacceptable training practices.³¹

Conclusions

6.32 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.

Other Issues

6.33 The Committee wishes to comment on two other issues which were raised in evidence during the inquiry. These issues are the enforcement of animal welfare rules and the use of chains on horses.

Enforcement of Animal Welfare Rules

6.34 An issue raised during the inquiry was the adequacy of show societies' rules regarding animal welfare matters. The RNCAS in its submission noted that the Society intended to give greater emphasis to the rule applying to mistreatment of animals presented at the show. Penalties are being considered against any person in breach of the rule.³²

6.35 Mr Duncan of RNCAS explained the reasons for this action. He stated:

I do not think in the past our views were properly expressed in the penalties so whilst everybody had no doubt that they would be dealt with, I do not think that our by-laws reflected that concern.³³

6.36 The Committee is of the view that the effective implementation of show societies' rules on animal welfare requires the consistent application of appropriate penalties.

Use of Chains

6.37 RSPCA (NSW) noted in its submission that extremely heavy chains are often left on carriage horses for extended periods to encourage a high-stepping gait.³⁴

6.38 The Committee questioned Miss Rosemary Harmer, a Regional Inspector with RSPCA (NSW), regarding this evidence. She told the Committee that the allegation was based on anecdotal evidence and conceded that a judgement on this matter was subjective and that "what one person will call a heavy chain another will call light, depending on your perspective."³⁵ Miss Harmer added that the heaviness or lightness of the chains also depends on the size of the horse and the length of time the horse has to bear it.³⁶

6.39 The Committee inspected examples of these chains on horses at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and observed that the chains used were light chains. The Committee did not consider they posed an animal welfare problem. This is not to say that heavier chains are not used. Such a practice is unacceptable.

ENDNOTES

1. *Evidence*, Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, p. 50.
2. *Evidence*, Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, p. 251.
3. *ibid.*
4. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, pp. 126-7.
5. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 328.
6. *Evidence*, Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, p. 52.
7. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 135.
8. *ibid.*
9. *Evidence*, Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, p. 53.
10. *Evidence*, Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, p. 254.
11. *Evidence*, Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, p. 52.
12. *ibid.*
13. *Evidence*, Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, p. 254.
14. *Evidence*, RSPCA Australia, p. 135.
15. *Evidence*, Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, p. 58.
16. *ibid.*, p. 60.
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.*, p. 62.
19. *ibid.*, p. 63.
20. *Evidence*, Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, p. 253.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 253-4.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 259.

23. Equestrian Federation of Australia, *Rules for Showjumping Events*, July 1989, p. 39.
24. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 18.
25. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 432.
26. Equestrian Federation of Australia, *Rules for Showjumping Events*, July 1989, p. 40.
27. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, p. 8.
28. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 431.
29. *ibid.*, p. 432.
30. *Evidence*, Australian Equine Veterinary Association, pp. 18-19.
31. *Evidence*, Equestrian Federation of Australia, p. 432.
32. *Evidence*, Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, p. 249.
33. *ibid.*, p. 258.
34. *Evidence*, RSPCA New South Wales, p. 329.
35. *ibid.*, p. 356; p. 358.
36. *ibid.*, p. 356.

FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Senator Ray Devlin, Tasmania

- Member September 1987 to June 1990
- Chairman August 1989 to June 1990

Senator Jack Evans, Western Australia

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator George Georges, Queensland

- Chairman December 1983 to June 1987

Senator Jean Hearn, Tasmania

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator John Morris, New South Wales

- Member September 1987 to May 1990
- Chairman September 1987 to August 1989

Senator Norm Sanders, Tasmania

- Member August 1985 to March 1990

Senator the Hon. Doug Scott, New South Wales

- Member December 1983 to June 1985

Senator John Siddons, Victoria

- Member July 1985 to August 1985

APPENDIX 2

INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDED THE COMMITTEE WITH SUBMISSIONS

Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales

Arabian Horse Society of Australia, Windsor, New South Wales

Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, Collingwood, Victoria

Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, Tamworth, New South Wales

Australian Endurance Riders Association, Nanango, Queensland

Australian Equine Veterinary Association, Artarmon, New South Wales

Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, Walkerville, South Australia

Australian Horse Council, Oakey, Queensland

Australian Professional Rodeo Association, MacKay, Queensland

Australian Sports Commission, Bruce, Australian Capital Territory

Bennett-Elliott, Mrs M., Dumbleton, Ms R., and Schroen, Mrs C., Dhurringile, Victoria

Calvinistic Political and Social Association, Albany, Western Australia

Equestrian Federation of Australia, Norwood, South Australia

Finn, Mr H., Wondai, Queensland

Hayes, Mr J., Adelong, New South Wales

Hoare, Dr R., Wilton, New South Wales

Martin, Mr A., Rosemeadow, New South Wales

New South Wales Government, Sydney, New South Wales

Northern Territory Government, Darwin, Northern Territory

Pollitt, Dr C., St Lucia, Queensland

Rowley, Ms S., Bungonia, New South Wales

Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

RSPCA Australia Inc., Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

RSPCA (NSW), Yagoona, New South Wales

South Australian Government, Adelaide, South Australia

Stacey, Mr A., Launceston, Tasmania

**WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE
THE COMMITTEE**

Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales

- Mr S. Johnston, Committee Member

Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, Collingwood, Victoria

- Dr J. Auty, Honorary Technical Adviser
- Ms G. Oogjes, Director

Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association, Tamworth, New South Wales

- Mr M. Button, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr W. Vivers, Director

Australian Veterinary Association, including the Australian Equine Veterinary Association, Artarmon, New South Wales

- Dr C. Bassett, President
- Dr P. Ellis, Member of the Executive Committee
- Dr J. Plant, President-elect

Australian Endurance Riders Association, Nanango, Queensland

- Mr J. Innes, National President
- Mrs J. Petersen, Vice President
- Mr G. Sample, National Delegate
- Ms B. Timms, National Secretary
- Dr C. Walker, Honorary Veterinarian

Australian Federation for the Welfare of Animals, Walkerville, South Australia

- Dr G. Alexander, Convenor and Councillor
- Dr I. Gollan, Member

Australian Horse Council, Oakey, Queensland

- Mr J. Holland, Vice President
- Dr R. Pascoe, Honorary Secretary

Australian Professional Rodeo Association, Warwick, Queensland

- Mr R. Blanchard, Board Representative
- Mr J. Gill, Stock Contractors' Representative

Equestrian Federation of Australia, Norwood, South Australia

- Ms P. Walker, Secretary-General

National Rodeo Association, Caboolture, Queensland

- Mr D. Butterfield, Financial Director
- Mr T. McHugh, Executive Director of Operations
- Mr W. Urquhart, President

New South Wales Government, Sydney, New South Wales

- Miss L. Chave, Special Veterinary Officer, Animal Welfare Branch, Department of Local Government
- Mr C. McCaskill, Member, New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council

New South Wales Horse Trials Council

- Dr J. Backhouse, Veterinary Surgeon
- Dr R. Hoare, Vice President

Pollitt, Dr C., Department of Companion Animal Medicine and Surgery,
School of Veterinary Science, University of Queensland, St Lucia,
Queensland

Royal National Capital Agricultural Society, Dickson, Australian Capital
Territory

- Mr H. Duncan, Chief Executive Officer

RSPCA Australia Inc., Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

- Dr H. Wirth, President
- Mr C. Wright, Executive Officer

RSPCA (NSW), Yagoona, New South Wales

- Miss R. Harmer, Regional Inspector
- Ms A. Large, Assistant Director

South Australian Government, Adelaide, South Australia

- Dr M. Barton, Chairman, Animal Welfare Advisory Committee,
Animal Welfare Office, Department of Environment and
Planning
- Ms J. Farrelly, Executive Officer, Animal Welfare, Animal
Welfare Office, Department of Environment and Planning
- Dr G. Neumann, Principal Veterinary Officer, Department of
Agriculture