



Code of practice for rodeo and rodeo school livestock in Victoria

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Bureau of Animal Welfare, Attwood

Part 1. Introduction

1. Preface

The purpose of this Code is to provide the minimum standards for the care and welfare of rodeo and rodeo school livestock in Victoria under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1997*.

2. General Principles

Proper consideration must be given to the health and welfare of animals used in rodeos and rodeo schools. Events and procedures should be specifically designed to prevent cruelty and minimise the impacts on the welfare of the animals used. Furthermore, people who have responsibilities in the organisation and running of rodeos and rodeo schools should have appropriate training to ensure that the animal welfare needs are met.

Where this Code of Practice is silent, the minimum standards for the yarding, handling, transportation and care of rodeo and rodeo school animals shall be in accordance with the relevant Victorian animal welfare legislation and Codes of Practice. All people associated with rodeo animals must comply with the relevant Victorian animal welfare legislation which gives effect to this Code of Practice.

3. Objectives

The objectives of these standards are to:

- protect the welfare of livestock in rodeos and rodeo schools;
- ensure that associated personnel are aware of their responsibilities as outlined in these standards;
- provide guidelines and standards for arena conditions, yard and chute design;
- establish criteria for participants and staff in the handling and care of livestock; and
- provide a basis for monitoring the welfare of animals at rodeos and rodeo schools.

4. Definitions

Throughout this document, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions apply.

4.1 Rodeo / Rodeo School

For the purposes of these standards, a “rodeo” or “rodeo school” means an event using cattle and/or horses which includes any exhibition of or competition in:

- Saddle Bronc Riding;
- Bareback Bronc Riding;
- Bull Riding;
- Steer Riding;
- Roping or Tying;
- Steer Wrestling;
- Team Roping;
- Buck jumping;
- Rough-riding;
- Animal dogging.

It is not acceptable to use animals other than cattle and horses in a rodeo or rodeo school, nor is it acceptable to run events in the rodeo or rodeo school that are not covered by any Victorian Code of Practice and/or animal welfare legislation.

4.2 Rodeo Organiser

The permit holder for a rodeo or rodeo school under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

4.3 Judge

A judge, nominated by an approved organisation, officiating at a rodeo or rodeo school.

4.4 Livestock Welfare Officer

A person appointed by the judges of an approved organisation to be responsible for the welfare of animals at a rodeo or rodeo school. The Livestock Welfare Officer reports to the judges any breaches of these standards which have been brought to their attention. This person must be fully conversant with these welfare standards and competent in assessing whether the standards are being met.

4.5 Stock Contractor

A person who is accredited by an approved organisation to provide livestock for rodeo or rodeo school events.



4.6 Rodeo School Instructor

A person who is accredited by an approved organisation to provide instruction on technique in rodeo schools. An instructor must be nominated for each class of instruction.

4.7 Rodeo School Instructor-in-charge

A person who is accredited by an approved organisation to supervise instructors in rodeo schools.

4.8 Approved Organisation

A rodeo organisation approved by the Director of the Bureau of Animal Welfare which promotes a high standard of welfare in the conduct of rodeos and rodeo schools as defined in Appendix 1.

4.9 Competitor

A person who competes in a rodeo event.

4.10 Veterinary Practitioner

A veterinary practitioner who is registered with the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria and has experience with cattle and horses.

4.11 Animal welfare legislation

“Animal welfare legislation” means the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1997.

Part 2 – Responsibilities of personnel

5. Policy Statement

Animals used in rodeos and rodeo schools must be treated humanely.

All people associated with the running of, or participation in, the rodeo or rodeo school are individually and jointly responsible for the welfare of animals used in events.

6. Rodeo Organiser's Responsibilities

The rodeo organiser is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the animals at the rodeo or rodeo school.

The Organiser of a rodeo or rodeo school must ensure that:

- the stock contractors and instructors used are accredited by an approved organisation and are competent to undertake their duties;
- all participants and staff are aware of the requirements of these standards;
- only properly qualified and competent personnel are appointed to care for, handle and treat rodeo livestock;
- a registered veterinary practitioner is on site at all times to handle animal emergencies and to inspect all animals prior to and after competition;
- yards, chutes and equipment comply with these standards.

7. Stock Contractor's Responsibilities

The stock contractor is responsible for the appropriate husbandry and handling of all rodeo or rodeo school livestock. Stock contractors must be accredited by an approved organisation.

The stock contractor must ensure that:

- transport and handling of animals is undertaken in accordance with the relevant Victorian Codes of Practice and legislation for the welfare of animals;
- all animals supplied are in good health and are suitable for the purpose for which they are intended;
- animals other than cattle and horses do not take part in a rodeo or rodeo school event;
- the welfare of livestock is maintained, other than in the arena where the judges are entirely responsible. This includes humane handling and the provision of adequate food, water and shelter;
- no stimulant, hypnotic or other substance is used on any animal which is to take part, other than that prescribed by a veterinary practitioner for the legitimate treatment of injury or illness;
- unsuitable animals are withdrawn from competition;
- the instructions of the veterinary practitioner are implemented;
- cattle and horses are penned separately in the yards and during transport. [Note: Aggressive and injured animals must be isolated from others and animals with young at foot must not be yarded or used in connection with a rodeo or rodeo school];
- veterinary assistance is obtained promptly if an animal is injured in any way;
- an animal that weighs less than 200 kilograms does not take part in a rodeo or rodeo school event;
- any breaches of this standard are brought to the attention of the livestock welfare officer, rodeo organiser and approved organisation.

8. Instructors' Responsibilities

Instructors must be accredited by an approved organisation and are responsible for the supervision of all rodeo school participants in their class of instruction.

Any breaches of this standard that have been brought to the attention of an instructor are to be reported to the Instructor-in-charge.

9. Instructor-in-charge's Responsibilities

The Instructor-in-charge must be accredited by an approved organisation and is responsible for the supervision of all other instructors participating in a rodeo school.

The Instructor-in-charge should ensure that each class of instruction is overseen by an instructor.

Any breaches of this standard that have been brought to the attention of the Instructor-in-charge are to be reported to the stock contractor, livestock welfare officer, rodeo school organiser and approved organisation.

10. Judges' Responsibilities

Judges must ensure that:

- the conduct of the rodeo or rodeo school complies with this code and other relevant Victorian animal welfare legislation and codes;
- all animals used in a competition are inspected prior to the commencement of the rodeo or rodeo school by the stock contractor and the veterinary practitioner, and that any lame, sick or injured animals, or animals

with defective eyesight, do not take part in the rodeo or rodeo school;

- c) inspections are performed on all competition equipment and the manner in which the equipment is set or used on the animal complies in all respects with these standards;
- d) an incident report is completed by the field officer of an approved organisation for each rodeo or rodeo school including any animal injuries or any failure to comply with these standards. This should be provided to the relevant rodeo association within seven days of the event;
- e) all animals used in any event conform to the specifications of these standards;
- f) if the judge is not satisfied that the above points a) to e) have been fulfilled, the rodeo or rodeo school must not proceed.

11. Competitors' Responsibilities

A competitor in a rodeo or rodeo school event is responsible for the animals he or she uses during that event. All competitors must:

- a) treat all animals they interact with in a humane manner;
- b) only use equipment complying with these standards and
- c) obtain prompt veterinary assistance if one of the animals which they have used is injured in any way.

12. Veterinary Practitioner's Responsibilities

The veterinary practitioner is responsible for providing expert advice on the suitability of each animal for competition and has the final say on this. The veterinary practitioner should inspect animals before and after events and deal with emergencies. A veterinary report for each rodeo or rodeo school including details of any animal injuries or failure to comply with this Code should be provided to the Bureau of Animal Welfare within seven days of the event.

Part 3 – Rules for the care of livestock

13. Sick and Injured Animals

- a) Animals used in all events are to be inspected by the stock contractor and the veterinary practitioner before competition, and no sore, lame, sick or injured animal, nor any animal with defective eyesight shall be permitted to participate at any time.
- b) Should an animal become sick or injured between the time it is selected and the time it is scheduled to be used, that animal shall not be used.
Sick or injured animals should be given appropriate treatment.

14. Veterinary Attendance

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1997* require that the rodeo must not commence or continue unless the veterinary practitioner and the accredited stock contractor nominated on the rodeo permit are in attendance at the rodeo.

The nominated veterinary practitioner must attend a rodeo school before the commencement of the school and be available during the conduct of the school.

The decision of the veterinary practitioner as to the suitability of an animal for competition shall be final.

15. Response to Serious Stock Injuries

- a) An appropriate conveyance must be available to remove a seriously injured animal to a suitable place for further examination and treatment.
- b) If appropriate a seriously injured animal should be humanely killed on site.
- c) A seriously injured animal shall be placed apart from other livestock, housed in an appropriate manner, and be examined and treated immediately by the veterinary practitioner.
- d) A means to euthanase seriously injured animals and a person licensed and qualified to use the means must be available at all times while the rodeo or rodeo school is in progress. Livestock must be euthanased in accordance with the Victorian Code of Practice for the species concerned.
- e) Mobile screens must be available at all times during the rodeo or rodeo school. If it is necessary to destroy an injured animal, the screens must be placed around the animal to effectively screen the incident from public view before the animal is destroyed, unless this would unduly prolong the suffering of the animal.

16. Injury Prevention

- a) Chutes, yards, lanes and races must have no sharp edges or protrusions and should be designed, constructed and maintained in a manner which prevents injury to handlers or animals and facilitates the quiet and efficient handling of stock.
- b) An animal that repeatedly gets down in the chute, repeatedly tries to jump out of the chute, becomes excessively excited, or appears to be in danger of injury must be immediately released and examined by the veterinary practitioner. If found to be unfit for any reason, the animal shall be withdrawn from participation for that day or session.
- c) A sufficient number of appropriately trained people and suitable equipment should be available to humanely assist an animal should it become caught in the chutes, yards or races and to make any repairs necessary to ensure that the facilities meet the required standard.

17. General Safety and Welfare Provisions

- a) Livestock shall be removed from the arena immediately after completion of the individual entry.
- b) No small animal or pet shall be permitted in the arena of a rodeo event or training area of a rodeo school.
- c) The use of fireworks at the rodeo is prohibited while any stock are in the arena, and is prohibited at a rodeo school.
- d) A person under the influence of liquor or drugs must not be permitted to take part in any rodeo or rodeo school event or to handle animals in the holding yards, chute or arena.

- e) Entertainers, such as clowns, must not be permitted to abuse, worry or torment in any manner whatsoever, any animal taking part in the rodeo or rodeo school.

18. Welfare Issues

If a welfare issue arises at a rodeo or rodeo school, the first point of contact should be the stock contractor or the livestock welfare officer. The rodeo organiser and approved organisation should also be advised of any welfare issues that arise.

Part 4 – Equipment requirements and specifications

19. Rodeo Livestock Handling Equipment

- a) All livestock must be treated humanely and handling equipment must not be used inappropriately or excessively.
- b) Equipment for livestock handling shall be of the type and specification generally used for the transport and handling of horses and cattle and must comply with all relevant Victorian animal welfare legislation and Codes of Practice.

19.1 Electric Prods

- a) Electric prods, known as “cattle prodders”, should only be used to protect the safety of an animal or person, and their use is subject to the following conditions:
They must be:
- of minimum amperage;
 - powered by dry cell batteries only;
 - hand held with batteries contained in the handle;
 - only able to deliver a single charge per application;
 - used with restraint and restricted to the minimum amount necessary;
 - applied only to the hip, hindquarters or shoulder areas of the animal.
- b) In time events electric prods must not be used:
- if an animal is loaded and standing in the time event chute;
 - to send an animal into the arena when the chute gate is opened.
- c) In riding events electric prods must not be used;
- when the animal is secured in the chute;
 - when the chute gate opens, unless it is necessary to protect both the animal and the contestant from possible injury against the chute or chute gate or to turn out a chute stalling animal.

In such cases the electric prod may only be applied to clear an animal from the chute and by or under the direct supervision of the stock contractor.

Under no circumstances may an electric prod be used in the arena.

19.2 Handling Aids

The use of aids which encourage movement in response to sound such as flappers, metallic rattles and light polythene tubing is acceptable to encourage movement and for **handling** animals in yards, lanes and races. The use of

aids which can be used to strike or poke animals with sufficient force to cause pain or injury is not permitted. This includes sticks, paddles, lengths of heavy plastic, metal piping, fencing wire or heavy leather belts.

20. Event Equipment

Event equipment is used to facilitate the event and in doing this should be designed and maintained to ensure that the animal is not injured.

Equipment must conform in all respects to the specifications below.

20.1. Spurs

Spurs are used to help the rider's timing and purchase on the animal. To reduce possible injury to the animal, the spur rowel must be dulled and not less than three millimetres in width at its narrowest part; there must be a minimum diameter of two centimetres to the point of the rowel. Fully locked rowels, or rowels that can be locked on spurs are prohibited.

20.2 Flank Straps

Flank straps are used to improve the horse's bucking style. Only lined, quick-release flank straps can be used. The lining must be soft and flexible such as soft plastic, felt or sheepskin. The lined portion of the flank strap shall be positioned in such a way that it covers both flanks and the belly of the animal. The coverings and linings of flank straps shall be soft and flexible and must not be hard, brittle, worn or damaged. Sharp or cutting objects must not be used in a flank strap.

20.3 Protective Horn Wraps

Horn wraps are to be used in team roping and must protect the ears and base of horns from rope burns.

20.4 Neck Ropes

The neck rope is used to maintain the horse's head towards the steer while the rider dismounts and discourage dragging. A neck rope must be fitted to horses used for roping and tying, through which the catch rope must pass before it is tied to the saddle horn. Placement of the neck rope must be no more than half the distance down the roping horse's neck, as measured from the head.

20.5 Jerk Line

The jerk line is used for roping and tying events. It is a rope from the bridle fed through a pulley on the saddle to the rider. As the rider dismounts to throw the steer, the jerk line plays out in a series of jerks which discourages the horse from moving backwards and dragging the steer.

The contestant must adjust the catch rope, reins and jerk line to prevent the rope horse from dragging the roped animal.

Part 5 – Stock selection and use

All animals must be fit, healthy, without defects and suitable for the intended use.

21. Stock Source

All stock must be supplied by a stock contractor.

22. Animal Size

An animal that weighs less than 200 kilograms must not be permitted to take part in the rodeo or rodeo school.

23. Horses

- Horses used in rodeo and rodeo school events must be mature, sound and fit for the intended use. Age should not be used as the sole criterion of maturity, other factors such as size and physical conformation must be taken into account.
- Horses under three (3) years may not be sufficiently mature for bucking events and must not be used.
- The criterion for determination of the age suitability of a bucking horse is the presence of the central adult incisors in wear.
- Horses used for bucking events may not be used on more than three occasions on any one day.

24. Cattle

The number of times that cattle may be used in competition varies according to the rigours of the event and the conditioning of the cattle to rodeo or rodeo school competition.

The following limitations must be observed:

- the same cattle must not be used for steer wrestling and roping events.
- cattle may not be used for steer wrestling or roping more than three times on any one day.
- cattle may not be used for bucking stock events more than three times on any day.
- each competitor is allowed only one loop (throw) in roping and tying events and in team roping only two loops in total are allowed in each team.

25. Selection of Animals for Rope and Tie

The minimum weight for animals roping and tying is 200 kilograms.

26. Selection of Animals for Steer Wrestling

The optimum weight for animals shall be 250 kilograms with a range of 200 kilograms minimum to 300 kilograms maximum.

All animals must have suitable horns and the horns must be a minimum of 23 centimetres in length.

27. Selection of Animals for Team Roping

The optimum weight for animals in team roping shall be 250 kilograms with a range of 200 kilograms minimum to 300 kilograms maximum.

All animals must have suitable horns and the horns must be a minimum of 17 centimetres in length.

Part 6 – Arena selection and use

28. Arena, Chutes and Yards

The veterinary practitioner, the stock contractor and the livestock welfare officer must be satisfied that the arena or training area, chutes, yards and races will not compromise the welfare of the animals.

29. Surfaces

The rodeo organiser is responsible for ensuring the arena surface provides traction and safety for personnel and livestock. In general, the standard arena should be a suitable, soil based surface, disced or softened to an approximate depth of eight to ten centimetres. The arena or training area must be free of rocks, holes and obstacles.

Other surfaces may be used provided that they are well drained, provide a secure footing and be at least as safe for the animals as an appropriate soil based surface. The surface must be approved by the veterinary practitioner, the stock contractor and the livestock welfare officer.

30. Size

Arenas and training areas which are too small for the particular event create a danger to livestock, competitors and the spectators in the event. The arena or training area must be of a size suitable for the events taking place.

31. Fencing

The construction, height and appearance of fencing should discourage stock from attempting to push through the fence or jump over it. Fences should also be clearly visible to stock and should not appear open to the animal.

Portable arenas:

Portable arenas should have panels which are secure and do not move or bend when pushed against. As a guide, the minimum height should be 180 centimetres.

Fixed arenas:

Fixed arenas should be of secure construction and flush on the inside. Where cable is used in steel arenas, it should be strained and the space between the cables should not be great enough to allow stock to pass through it. As a guide, the minimum fence height should be 165 centimetres.

There must be no protrusions on fences or gateways likely to cause injury.

32. Time Event Chute

The time event chute must have a 76 centimetre clearance above the height of the animal in the chute and at the gate, when the gate is open.

Part 7 – Specific rodeo events

33. All Events

Any piece of equipment either on the animal or removed from it which may compromise the welfare of the animal is not allowed. The judges have the final decision on the suitability of equipment.

34. Saddle Bronc Riding

The saddle must not be set too far forward on the withers and must be correctly fitted. There must be a minimum clearance of 10 centimetres under the gullet of the saddle.

The front cinch of the saddle shall be a minimum of 12 centimetres in width. The back cinch of the saddle must not be over-tightened. Sharp or cutting objects must not be used in a cinch, saddle, girth or flank strap.

35. Bareback Bronc Riding

The bareback rigging shall not be more than 26 centimetres in width at the handhold and not more than 16 centimetres in width at the D rings. Suitable pads must be placed under the rigging and extend a minimum of 5 centimetres past the back of the rigging. The girth on the bareback rigging must be not less than 12 centimetres in width. Loose ropes must not be used on any animal in bareback riding events.

36. Bull Riding

The equipment used in bull riding equipment shall be a loose rope with or without a hand hold. There must be no knots or hitches preventing the rope from falling from the animal after the contestant has been thrown or dismounted. A contestant shall not re-set and re-pull the rope more than twice if the bull is standing quietly in the chute.

37. Roping and Tying

37.1 Time Limit

The time limit to rope, throw by hand and complete the tie is thirty (30) seconds from when the barrier is released. After the tie is completed and the time signalled, the roper must immediately mount the horse and ride it forward to loosen the catch rope.

Only one loop is allowed a contestant in each round of the event. If the first throw fails to catch the animal the roper is not permitted a second attempt. The purpose of this is to prevent the prolonged chasing of an animal around the arena.

37.2 Jerking down and Dragging

It is not acceptable to pull an animal backward off its feet (jerk down) or to drag a roped animal. Contestants must use appropriate technique and properly fitted equipment to protect the animal against an abrupt stop after being roped and to prevent the rope horse from dragging a roped animal.

38. Steer Wrestling

38.1 Time Limit

The time limit to catch and throw the steer is thirty (30) seconds from when the barrier is released.

38.2 Legal Throws

The steer must not be knocked down or thrown before it is brought to a stop and the catch is made. If the animal is off its feet before a legal throw is made it must stand on all four feet and be properly thrown.

39. Team Roping

39.1 Protective Horn Wraps

Steers used for team roping shall be fitted with protective horn wraps.

39.2 Time Limit

The time limit to rope the head and the heels of the steer is thirty (30) seconds from when the barrier is released. The time will be taken when the steer is properly roped with the catch ropes dallied, with both horses facing the steer

and with no slack in the ropes. To prevent slack being taken up too hard both front feet should be on the ground when the time is taken.

Only two loops are allowed in each round of the event (one for the header and one for the heeler). If a throw fails to catch the animal the ropers are not permitted a second attempt.

39.3 Catching

The steer must be standing when it is roped by both the header and the heeler. The steer must not be roughly handled. The only permitted head catches for team roping are around both horns, around the neck, or around a half head. The only permitted heel catch without a time penalty is around both back legs including behind the shoulders, provided the catch is made over the heels.

After the catch, the header must dally his rope and change the direction of the steer before the heeler can attempt a catch on the back legs.

Appendix 1

An “approved organisation” is a rodeo organisation approved by the Director of the Bureau of Animal Welfare which promotes humane rodeo conduct, with proper consideration for the animals’ health and welfare, and compliance of members with this Code and Victorian animal welfare legislation by:

- Operating with direct competitor and committee membership and having authority to enforce code provisions and penalties;
 - Developing and promoting rodeo education and training courses for relevant rodeo personnel which:
 - Familiarise members with relevant Victorian Codes of Practice and animal welfare legislation;
 - Establish appropriate competency criteria and the development of appropriate training for stock contractors, rodeo school instructors and other relevant rodeo personnel in the handling and care of rodeo livestock to ensure minimum standards of competency as a prerequisite to accreditation;
 - Maintaining a formal procedure for stock contractor, judge and rodeo school instructor accreditation (ie satisfactory completion of an appropriate course followed by a probationary period);
 - Appointing sufficient numbers of experienced members as field officers so that rodeo activities of members can be adequately assessed.
- “Field officer” refers to a person appointed by the approved rodeo organisation who:
- regularly attends rodeo events in Victoria;
 - reports breaches of the Code or Victorian animal welfare legislation to the approved organisation;
 - provides details for the annual report to the Bureau of Animal Welfare and,
 - ensures that stock contractors nominated to provide stock for the rodeo are accredited with the approved organisation;
 - provides annual incident reports of the rodeo events held throughout the year to the Bureau of

Animal Welfare, details the number of events held, the numbers and types and severity of any injuries, their causes and remedial action taken. If there are any breaches of any Victorian Code of Practice or animal welfare legislation, the details of these and the remedial action taken must also be reported.

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