

RSPCA warns rodeos in extreme heat should be cancelled

RSPCA South Australia has warned organisers of this Saturday's Wilmington rodeo that horses and livestock should not be forced to participate in the event, especially when the mercury is tipped to hit 42 degrees.

RSPCA South Australia's Animal Welfare Advocate Dr Rebekah Eyers says that rodeos already use painful devices such as flank straps, spurs and electric prods to exploit an animal's fear and stress response, all for entertainment.

"The use of these devices already expose animals to potentially significant injury, suffering and distress - so forcing rodeo animals to perform in extreme heat on top of this only exacerbates their stress and is a significant risk to their welfare," she said.

Earlier this week RSPCA South Australia contacted the organisers of the APRA (Australian Professional Rodeo Association) Wilmington rodeo seeking information on their heat policy and urging them to cancel this event and received no response, as well as APRA itself, who confirmed there is no heat threshold policy in place for rodeos in South Australia.

"Putting rodeo animals through extreme heat is unacceptable, especially since this is for the sole purpose of entertainment despite animal welfare science increasingly acknowledging the impact of heat stress on livestock. The transport of these animals to the venue in extreme heat prior to the event is also a major concern," Dr Eyers said.

"According to the Bureau of Meteorology website, the air temperature for Wilmington is still forecast to be 41 degrees even 7.30pm at night on Saturday.

"To safeguard the welfare of these animals the event should be cancelled."

RSPCA South Australia has also received several complaints from members of the public concerned that this event should not proceed during a heatwave.

Background Information

Rodeo and bull riding events are still legal in South Australia.

Due to animal welfare concerns, rodeo events (including bull riding) are illegal in the UK and the ACT and there is a growing push to ban them in other jurisdictions as well.

As it currently stands, there is no legislation stipulating a heat threshold after which it is unacceptable for the use of animals in entertainment, rodeos and racing, or for the purpose of animals being transported. RSPCA has long urged the industry bodies to implement a heat threshold policy.

For more information about the RSPCA's position on rodeos -

http://kb.rspca.org.au/RSPCA-Policy-C08-Rodeos_645.html

http://kb.rspca.org.au/Do-horses-and-cattle-enjoy-participating-in-rodeos_404.html

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