



Queensland
Government

Business Queensland (<https://www.business.qld.gov.au>)

Rodeo code of practice

The rodeo code of practice (<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/asmade/sl-2021-0173>) is a mandatory code of practice under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (the Act) since 1 January 2022. It contains the minimum acceptable standards of welfare for all animals being used at rodeos and rodeo schools. It applies to all cattle and horses which are used in the different rodeo activities.

The rodeo code of practice is based on the Queensland animal welfare standards and guidelines – Animals at rodeos (rodeo standards) (<https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-animal-welfare-standards-and-guidelines-animals-in-rodeos>) which were recommended by an established writing group to be progressed as the basis for future regulation of rodeos in Queensland. The rodeo standards were developed after consultation with the rodeo industry, animal welfare and animal rights groups, the veterinary profession and other relevant stakeholders.

The purposes of the rodeo standards are to:

- protect the welfare of animals used in rodeos and rodeo schools
- ensure rodeo officials and other persons are aware of their responsibilities when conducting a rodeo
- provide requirements for equipment used at rodeos and rodeo facilities such as arenas, yards and chutes
- outline the key requirements for competitors and other people handling and caring for animals used in rodeo activities at rodeos and rodeo schools.

Key mandatory requirements for rodeos

Mandatory requirements for rodeo officials, competitors and other relevant people

Below are some of the key mandatory requirements for rodeo officials, competitors and other people listed in the rodeo code of practice. However, you must refer to the code for the full list of requirements.

- Each person involved in a rodeo activity must have the experience, knowledge and skills required to carry out their responsibilities and comply with all relevant requirements under the Act and the rodeo code of practice.
- To conduct a rodeo, a rodeo organiser is required to:
 - appoint a rodeo animal welfare officer and other officials (who have been approved by a designated rodeo association)
 - engage a veterinary surgeon to treat or consult on the treatment of sick or injured animals used at a rodeo
 - ensure rodeo facilities (arena, chute, fencing, gates, yards and races) comply with the relevant requirements under the code of practice
 - ensure rodeo animals are kept away from fireworks and other noise to prevent them from being disturbed
 - keep a rodeo animal incident record, if a rodeo animal is sick, injured or killed at a rodeo
 - ensure compliance with all relevant requirements under the code of practice.

- The rodeo animal welfare officer is required to:
 - inspect the rodeo arena, chute and yards to ensure they are safe for rodeo animals and people to use
 - ensure any lame, sick, distressed or unsuitable rodeo animals are withdrawn from the rodeo and receive appropriate care (including veterinary treatment) or are humanely killed (if required)
 - ensure rodeo animals are given access to feed and water in compliance with the code of practice
 - ensure compliance with all relevant requirements of the code of practice.
- Veterinary surgeons engaged for a rodeo are required to be on-site at a rodeo to treat any sick, injured or distressed rodeo animals or be available for consultation while rodeo animals are on-site at a rodeo.
- Judges are required to ensure a rodeo animal is released from the chute if the animal is on the ground, tries to climb out of the chute twice or it is reasonable to consider it is in the interests of the animal's welfare to withdraw it from the event.
- Protection clowns may distract a rodeo animal that has thrown a competitor to prevent injury to people in the arena. However, they must not provoke the animal to a greater extent than necessary.
- Anyone supplying animals to a rodeo must ensure they are suitable for the particular rodeo activity, given access to feed and water in compliance with the code of practice, are withdrawn from the rodeo and receive appropriate care (including veterinary treatment) if lame, sick, distressed or unsuitable for an activity and comply with all relevant requirements under the Act and rodeo code of practice.
- Competitors are required to comply with any reasonable directions given by a rodeo official or veterinary surgeon in relation to a rodeo activity and all other relevant requirements under the rodeo code of practice.

Mandatory requirements for rodeo facilities

- Chutes, fences, gates and races must be structurally sound, minimise any injury to rodeo animals and be appropriately designed to allow animals to be handled quietly and efficiently.

Mandatory requirements for using and handling rodeo animals

- Rodeo animals used at rodeos must be in good health and not be pregnant or lactating with dependent or unweaned offspring.
- Cattle must be of body condition score 2 to 4 and horses of body condition score 3 to 4.
- Rodeo animals must have adequate space in a yard to move reasonably freely and be able to lie down and rise.
- When a rodeo animal is in a chute, it must not be provoked unnecessarily.
- A rodeo animal's tail must not be twisted or pulled (unless it is necessary to prevent the animal falling or is in the interests of the animal's welfare).
- Dogs cannot be used to move or control rodeo animals.
- If a rodeo animal is suffering as a result of an incident, then it may be killed humanely by a veterinary surgeon or a person acting under the direct supervision of a veterinary surgeon.
- Another person with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience, may humanely kill a rodeo animal. But this can only occur if a veterinary surgeon or person acting under the direct supervision of a veterinary surgeon is not present and it would be inhumane to allow the animal to continue suffering.

Mandatory requirements for the use of equipment on rodeo animals

- Spurs cannot be used as a goad on a rodeo animal while the animal is in a chute.
- An electrical prod can only be used on cattle, if they are at least 3 months of age and the person has made reasonable efforts to move the animal without an electrical prod beforehand. Cattle must be able to move

away from the prod and the prod must be applied as sparingly as possible.

- An electrical prod must not be applied to the face, anus, udder or genitals of cattle or on cattle in an arena or in a chute (unless it is necessary for the safety of the animal or the competitor).
- Handling aids such as flappers, rattles and canes can be used to encourage animals to move but not in a way that causes unnecessary pain to the animal.
- Rodeo organisers must ensure a conveyance device such as a rubber mat or sled is available to safely move an injured, immobile rodeo animal out of an arena for examination and veterinary treatment.

Mandatory requirements for different rodeo activities

Bareback bronc and saddleback bronc riding

- Horses must be at least 3 years old and cannot be used more than 2 times in 1 day.
- Bareback rigging and saddles must be fitted to the horses so as not to cause injury or pain.
- The front girth must be at least 125mm wide, and a pad used under bareback rigging must be soft, non-abrasive and extend at least 50mm past the back of the rigging.
- The rowel on a spur must freely rotate and be at least 20mm in diameter.
- The point on the rowel must be at least 3mm wide (at its narrowest part) and be blunt so it cannot penetrate the horse's skin.
- Flank straps must be:
 - at least 25mm wide
 - able to be released quickly
 - lined with soft, flexible material
 - not brittle, damaged, worn or have anything sharp attached
 - positioned to cover the horse's flank and belly but not the horse's genitals
 - not cause injury.

Breakaway roping

- Calves must weigh at least 100kg and cannot be used more than 3 times in 1 day (with a rest of at least 1 hour between uses).
- The head rope must be removed from the calf as soon as possible after the calf has been roped or the competitor has withdrawn from the activity or fails to properly complete the rodeo activity.
- A competitor must withdraw from the breakaway roping activity if the calf is not roped before it reaches the opposite side of the arena, or the string is not broken within 30 seconds after the calf was released from the chute.

Bull and steer riding

- The weight of the person riding the animal must be no more than 20% of the animal's live weight.
- The animal cannot be used more than 3 times in 1 day.
- The bull or steer rope must not have anything sharp or knots or hitches attached that would prevent the rope falling freely after a competitor has dismounted or been thrown to avoid injuring the animal.
- The flank rope must be made of soft cotton and have a diameter of at least 16mm or be covered or lined.
- The rowel on a spur must move at least a quarter of a turn and be at least 20mm in diameter.

- The point on the rowel must be at least 3mm wide (at its narrowest part) and be blunt so that it cannot penetrate the animal's skin.

Poddy riding

- The weight of the child riding the calf must be no more than 20% of the calf's live weight.
- The calf cannot be used more than 2 times in 1 day and must not have its ears or tail pulled.
- Adults must not ride a calf.
- A person must not use spurs on a calf.

Steer wrestling and chute dogging

- Steers must weigh at least 200kg.
- Steers cannot be used for the activity more than 3 times in 1 day and cannot be used in any other rodeo activity on the same day.
- A person must not put their fingers in the steer's eyes, nose or lips.

Team roping

- Steers must weigh at least 200kg.
- Steers cannot be used for the activity more than 3 times in 1 day and cannot be used in any other rodeo activity on the same day.
- A person must not rope a steer's hind feet unless the steer's head or horns have been roped and the steer has changed direction.
- Steers must not be stretched to the point where their front feet are lifted off the ground.
- Steers must be fitted with horn wraps made of a suitable material (i.e. a durable nylon webbing externally with a protective felt lining on the inside) that are securely fitted around the steer's head at the base of its horns and don't obscure the steer's vision.
- The competitors must withdraw from the team roping activity if 30 seconds has elapsed since the steer left the chute and the second competitor has failed to rope the steer's hind feet.

Rope and tie (calf roping)

The requirements for the rope and tie event include:

- the calf must be at least 100kg and cannot be used more than 3 times in 1 day (with a rest of at least 1 hour between uses)
- the calf must not:
 - be pulled backwards off its feet
 - be caused to stop suddenly
 - have excessive force used to ground it
 - be suddenly thrown sideways
 - be thrown onto its spine
 - dragged more than 1 metre
 - hit, jumped on or kicked
- a competitor must withdraw from the rope and tie activity if the calf is not roped before it reaches the opposite side of the arena or within 30 seconds after the calf was released from the chute.

- a person must use a roping safety device, which has been approved by the rodeo association. The roping safety device acts a 'shock absorber' and decreases the force experienced by the calf and the horse, once the calf has been roped.
- a person must ensure the head rope and leg tie ropes are removed from the calf as soon as possible after completing the activity or after the competitor is required to withdraw from the activity.

The Queensland Government has committed to reviewing the rope and tie (calf roping) activity 5 years after the commencement of the rodeo code of practice.

Duty of care for rodeo animals

Anyone who owns, manages or handles cattle or horses has a legal duty of care and is responsible for ensuring acceptable welfare standards for cattle and horses in their charge.

This includes:

- rodeo organisers (and rodeo committees)
- competitors
- stock contractors
- rodeo animal welfare officers
- judges
- protection clowns
- veterinarians
- chute workers
- pick up riders
- transporters.

Other welfare codes relevant to rodeo animals

Anyone involved in transporting cattle and horses must comply with the [compulsory code of practice for transport of livestock](https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/codes/transport) (<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/codes/transport>).

Also consider...

- Find out more about [animal welfare codes of practice](https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/codes/overview) (<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/codes/overview>).
- Read [schedule 5 of the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2023](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/si-2023-0117#sch.5) (<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/si-2023-0117#sch.5>) to learn more about the compulsory code of practice for the transport of livestock.
- Read [schedule 4 of the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2023](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/si-2023-0117#sch.4) (<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/si-2023-0117#sch.4>) to learn more about the compulsory code of practice about cattle.

Last reviewed: 6 Dec 2021

Last updated: 4 Sep 2023

CONTACTS

Jason Bode

Animal Biosecurity and Welfare – Operations Manager

Biloela

Ph: 0427 878 018

Bryan.bode@daf.qld.gov.au