

significantly important to rural communities and rural cohesion. In light of this, NAWAC has recently reviewed and updated the 2003 Animal Welfare (Rodeo) Code of Welfare, in consultation with Bull Riding New Zealand Inc, the New Zealand Rodeo Cowboys Association, New Zealand Veterinary Association, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals.

The only animals that may be used in rodeos in New Zealand are horses and cattle. There are approximately 35 rodeos held each year, overseen by the Rodeo Cowboys Association (NZRCA), as well as a small number of steer riding events, and a number of bull-riding competitions, overseen by Bull Riding New Zealand. Additionally, NZRCA runs rodeo training schools.

The updated Code informs owners and persons in charge of rodeo animals of the NZ Government's expectations concerning appropriate treatment of animals used in rodeos and makes clear the standards that must be achieved in order to ensure compliance with the NZ Animal Welfare Act 1999. Animals used in rodeos are often under the care of many different individuals during an event, therefore the 'person in charge' may be the rodeo organiser (who has an overarching responsibility for ensuring the good welfare of animals used at the rodeo), the contestant (considered the person in charge during the time that they are using the animal during an event), the animal welfare officer (who must be present at the rodeo and has direct responsibility for the welfare of all animals), the veterinarian (who must be present at the rodeo and should have suitable experience to be able to offer expert advice on the health and welfare status of rodeo animals and their suitability for competition), and rodeo staff and stock people (who are responsible for carrying out particular tasks).

The Code specifies fifteen minimum standards within the following key areas: stockmanship; food and water; selecting appropriate animals; handling; equipment (arena and gear); specific rodeo events (saddle and bareback bronco riding; bull and steer riding; rope and tie; team roping; steer wrestling; calf riding; and barrel racing); health, injury and disease; and emergency humane destruction.

Each section on a standard provided a brief introduction on its importance, followed by the minimum standard, along with indicators, which may be used to show that the minimum standard is being met. Additionally, there is often a section on what is considered best practice (which usually exceeds the minimum standard and offers a higher standard of animal welfare) and, where a minimum standard may be complex, or controversial, a further 'General information' section is also provided.

The most controversial events in a rodeo often involve calves (eg rope and tie, calf riding). The rope and tie is a timed event during which a young calf, released from a chute, is chased by a rider on horseback who ropes the calf, bringing the animal to an abrupt halt, at which point the rider dismounts and ties three of the calves legs together. The new Code attempts to mitigate any harm or distress caused to calves during this event by specifying a minimum

weight of 100 kg (Minimum Standard No 3 — Selecting Animals) and by making a number of other requirements such as: "(a) Calves must be handled using the minimum force and in a way that minimises pain and distress at all times during the event", and "(c) All reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure that calves are not busted, dragged or harmed in any other way during calf roping" (Minimum Standard No 9 — Rope and Tie, [a]–[f]). However, ultimately, the code recommends that "Calves should not be used in rodeo events".

Rodeos, Code of Welfare (October 2012). A4, 27 pages. National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, New Zealand. The guidelines are available at the MAF website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare>, or by emailing: animalwelfare@maf.govt.nz.

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RSPCA revise Freedom Food standards covering farmed pigs

Approximately 9.5 million pigs are slaughtered every year in the United Kingdom to supply the growing demand for pork. Thirty per cent of these pigs are cared for in line with the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Freedom Food farm assurance scheme, which covers the lives of pigs from when they are born, throughout the rearing process, during transport, and at slaughter.

In November 2014, the RSPCA published an updated version of their welfare standards for pigs. The new standards were developed in consultation with farmers, veterinary professionals and those working in animal welfare research, and aim to take into account advancements in scientific research, veterinary knowledge and practical developments.

The standards are arranged under six broad headings: Food and water; Environment; Management; Health; Transport; and Slaughter/Killing. Additionally, there are detailed Appendices covering: Herd biosecurity; Wild animal control plan; Transport standard operating and emergency procedure; Veterinary health and welfare plan guidance notes; and Documents required.

Many of the standards are similar to the previous edition, published in May 2012, with some reordering/renumbering. Where changes have been made, these are marked with an asterisk. Changes often involve additional material in the information boxes, which complement the mandatory standards. For example, in relation to farrowing sows, standard E6.2.1 states that "Prior to farrowing, materials must be provided in sufficient quantities, and be of a type, which allows sows to carry out their natural nesting behaviours", and the updated standards now includes a recommendation that "at least 2 kg of long straw be provided per sow to satisfy nest building behaviour" in the further information section.

Another change involves teeth clipping of piglets. Although the RSCPA state that: "The removal of the points of needle teeth of newborn pigs must not be carried out routinely". Many farmers do regularly carry out this procedure because

they consider there to be an increased risk of damage both to the sows' udder and to the piglets' faces if the needle teeth are left intact. The RSPCA already require that Freedom Food pig farmers request permission in writing, and including welfare-related reasons, to undertake the procedure. In the updated guidelines, welfare-related reasons must now include the number of instances of facial scarring, udder damage, and the numbers of pigs affected.

All relevant participants enrolled on the Freedom Food pig scheme have been sent copies of changes to the standards and guidance, including producers, hauliers, transporters, and abattoirs.

The RSPCA are also currently working on standards for indoor free (loose) farrowing systems and hope to issue guidance in this area in the near future.

RSPCA Welfare Standards for Pigs (November 2014). A4, 80 pages. Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). The updated standards may be downloaded from the RSPCA website: <http://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/farmanimals/standards/pigs> (ISBN: 1-898331-95-2).

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