

The Push to Ban Calf Roping is in Full Swing

By Melissa Coleman

By the end of February, it is expected that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will have received advice from the Office of Best Practice Regulation as to whether a period of public consultation is recommended to hear the community's views on calf roping remaining a legal event at Queensland Rodeos. The push to ban calf roping or the 'Rope and Tie' event as its industry name is known has been on and off the table for a number of years. In 2013 an attempt to develop National Rodeo Standards stalled when the Abbott Government withdrew funding. However, once this latest advice has been received by DAF Minister Furner, he is free to accept or reject the recommendation. Rodeo Campaign Director for Animal Liberation Queensland (ALQ) Gayle D'Arcy said if Minister Furner accepts the public consultation, a 2-month period is entered where interested parties make submissions to the Government outlining their reasons why the calf roping event should stay or go. "This current campaign to ban calf roping has been building for several years," Ms D'Arcy said. "After high levels of public concern at Rodeos throughout 2016-17, the Queensland Government asked for a report into calf roping from its own Rodeo Standards Advisory Group (SAG)." In early 2019 Minister Furner announced he was establishing a Working Party to develop Standards and Guidelines for Queensland Rodeos. "The Rodeo SAG is the working group which meets to debate and progress the draft Rodeo Standards," Ms D'Arcy said. "It's composed of many rodeo industry representatives, policy officers from DAF, and animal welfare reps such as RSPCA Qld, the Australian Veterinary Association, Animals Australia, and Animal Welfare League Qld." "We oppose Rodeo altogether, but to ban it entirely is a long-term objective. Calf roping is the first step. It produces fear and torments vulnerable baby animals, which is simply unacceptable today," she said. The welfare of calves used in calf roping events and the requirement for a veterinarian to be present were stated to be key considerations in developing the Standards. "Developing a policy of Standards and Guidelines has not been a priority for the Government but when a calf was injured in November 2018 at Caboolture, north of Brisbane, in the National final, they took notice." "The injured calf had to be carried out of the arena." "There was so much outrage from our supporters that the Government decided to develop some policies. Now we have a draft standards and guidelines policy for the industry when before we were the only State in Australia without them," she said. The increasing public concern regarding the welfare of animals used in rodeos could see Queensland align with other States in Australia. Victoria was the first to ban the calf roping event in the 1980s following the death of a calf and South Australia followed suit in 2007. Despite minimum standards varying between the two states some key requirements include the need to obtain a permit to conduct a rodeo, a veterinarian to be onsite during the event and a minimum body weight of 200 kg for rope and tie events. Ms D'Arcy said this guideline effectively disallows young calves from being roped because the minimum weight of 200kg means the calf cannot be lifted, which is a requirement of the rope and tie. The Animal Welfare League of Queensland have a representative within SAG who is reviewing the draft Standards and Guidelines. "AWLQ is supportive of our campaign." Last year ALQ commissioned a survey into attitudes of Queenslanders towards rodeo events. "The results were more anti rodeo than we expected. A clear majority opposed calf roping. Minister Furner has been provided with this report." Data from two representative samples of 1,000 Queensland's quantified that the majority of respondents (53.9%) reported that they opposed the event, 14.7% reported they were in favour of, and the remainder were undecided. Additionally, more than 58 000 people have signed the ALQ's current petition in support of a ban on calf-roping.

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