



PITTSBURGH WELCOMES BACK THE CRUELTY OF RODEO THIS WEEKEND

AN OPINION PIECE BY LCA'S PRESIDENT & FOUNDER, CHRIS DEROSE

January 20, 2025 - The recent decision to overturn Pittsburgh's 32-year ban on rodeos is a painful blow to animals that suffer in rodeos, and to the animal rights advocates who have long fought against the cruelty inherent in these events. Thanks to a backroom provision in Pennsylvania's state budget, the rodeo industry—led by the powerful Professional Bull Riders (PBR) organization—will be able to host events in Pittsburgh once again, despite local laws meant to protect animals from such exploitation. This decision is not only a step backwards in our progress toward compassionate treatment of animals, but it also raises serious concerns about the erosion of local democracy and control.

It is important to recognize what rodeos truly are: a form of animal abuse masked as entertainment. While rodeos are often seen as a celebration of tradition and "ranch life," there are more compassionate ways to honor these values without subjecting animals to fear, pain, and stress for the entertainment of spectators. The violence inherent in rodeo events is undeniable, and Pittsburgh's long-standing ban on such events was a reflection of the city's values—a commitment to ensuring that animal cruelty would not be tolerated under the guise of sport.

At the heart of most rodeo events is the exploitation and mistreatment of animals.

Despite claims that becoming a bull in a rodeo is like "winning the animal lottery," they are generally calm creatures that are provoked into battle at rodeos. In bull riding, wild and dangerous rides score the most points, and in order to encourage aggressive bucking, they

are fitted with flank straps, kicked with spurs, and sometimes shocked with high-voltage electric prods, despite the industry's attempts to downplay these practices. Injuries to these animals range from broken bones and internal bleeding to catastrophic damage like punctured lungs, organ failure, and death. **Rodeos are notorious for underreporting animal injuries.**

In addition to the physical pain inflicted, the emotional stress on these animals is immense. **The fear and confusion experienced by these animals is profound**, and the toll it takes on their well-being is irreversible.

The argument that rodeos are somehow "humane" because the animals are well cared for outside of the arena is deeply flawed and twisted. **There is no excuse possible for the torment they withstand during rodeo events.** No amount of pre or post-event care (if there even is any) that can make up for the physical and psychological damage caused by the violence they are subjected to in the arena.

What is perhaps most frustrating about this new provision is the way it bypasses local control. Pittsburgh's decision to ban rodeos in 1992 was a step forward for animal rights. It reflected the values of the community and the growing recognition that animal cruelty should not be disguised as entertainment, and that traditions must evolve when they cause harm. **Local lawmakers, supported by voters, understood that these practices had no place in a modern, compassionate society.** But now, thanks to a backdoor provision in the state budget—passed with little public notice and even less debate—that progress is being reversed. **It is deeply troubling that lawmakers would so casually endorse such practices by overriding a local ban.**

The decision to allow large, national rodeo organizations to circumvent these local laws represents a disturbing trend where powerful industries can influence legislation behind closed doors. **The people of Pittsburgh were not consulted, and their voices were drowned out by the interests of a powerful lobby.** It is deeply undemocratic to allow a single industry to dictate policies that affect entire communities. The rollback of Pittsburgh's ban on rodeos is a textbook example of how corporate interests can override the will of the people—and it sets a dangerous precedent for other local laws in the future. **For years, LCA has fought for a rodeo ban in Los Angeles, witnessing firsthand how the rodeo industry will stop at nothing—including exploiting political loopholes and deploying aggressive lobbying tactics—to ensure they can continue to profit off the abuse of animals.**

The decision to lift Pittsburgh's ban on rodeos is not the end of the road. **Animal advocates will continue to speak out against this cruelty, raise awareness about the suffering caused by rodeos, and fight to restore the ban.**

As a society, we have a moral obligation to evolve past outdated and inhumane practices. **Just as we have moved away from blood sports like cockfighting and dogfighting, we must also reject rodeos.** Pittsburgh was right to ban these events in 1992, and it must stand firm in its commitment to animal rights. The people of Pittsburgh deserve to live in a city that values compassion over cruelty—and that means keeping rodeos out of the city limits once and for all.

For the animals,

Chris DeRose

President & Founder

Last Chance for Animals