

The Systemic Harm of Rodeo & Hunting:

All In the Name of Tradition

People spend time in the forest to take in the oxygen-rich air, the sights and sounds, to soothe their nerves and rejuvenate. Forest bathing is a real thing; it's therapy. While walking in the woods and spotting wildlife, parents urge their children to hush and instruct them how to move so as not to disturb the wildlife living there. Children of hunter parents are told to hush and instructed on how to move so they can creep up on the wildlife to kill it. This is a fundamental difference in parenting and in how to appreciate being in the forest.

A sport hunter's passion to spend time in nature is not to forest bathe, to capture wildlife onto film, or in their minds. Their intent is to kill something. Survival has nothing to do with it. Survival hunting is different from hobby and trophy hunting. A sport hunter hunts because they derive a thrill from looking into the eyes of an animal, often frozen in fear, before firing a bullet that ends their life. The [repercussions](#) of what they do is of no concern to them. The excitement continues with the butchering, as this is a significant part of deciding



Displaying animal body parts on walls preserves the memory of the kill and gives the hunter a illusory sense of dominance and power while also serving as a display for bragging when guests visit.

1st image The Giansepillo/pexels, 2nd Image: The Canadian Press CBC News

which body parts to save and preserve as souvenirs and decorations. Often, these souvenirs are put forth as honouring and revering the majestic beauty of wildlife up close. What it really is, is an aggressive display of dominance. An amusing tradition for some, involves a ritual in which, for a hunter's first kill, they smear the animal's blood on their face or drink it. Some ritualize eating the heart

or liver raw. How can we expect someone who engages in such pursuits to nurture morally sound children with a respect for sentient beings?

These parents aim to nurture the same urge, mindset, and skills in their children on how to kill that they possess themselves. The foundational approach that sport hunters take with their preschoolers to achieve this is to desensitize and numb their child's empathy. They demean any innate fondness and tenderness that their child might naturally feel for animals by objectifying them. Young children naturally observe and mimic their parents, but the desensitization process is also aided by the fact that children of a tender age are not conscious of what they do. This explains why, out of the blue, they smack the pet dog on the head with a toy or pull the cat's tail until it screams. If a parent trivializes this behaviour, or is in the habit of hitting the dog or cat themselves, this leads the child to disregard the dog's feelings and ultimately emotionally disconnect from animals altogether. Children who witness people they know abuse animals are significantly more likely to also engage in treating animals cruelly (*Thompson & Gullone, 2006*).¹

Violence is Taught

Squirrels are often the first targets toddlers are instructed to practice on. As the child grows, they graduate to larger animals. Hunter parents make it a point to ensure the initiation period is enjoyable and the experience is good fun for the kids.² If a child is not taking to killing, handling, or seeing an animal butchered and perceiving such behaviour as repugnant, the adults carefully instruct them to dissociate their emotions from the act. They admit this themselves. What they seem less concerned with is what the psychological impacts of desensitizing their children will do to them in other areas of their lives and throughout their lives.

Then, there are parents who don't teach their children how to kill animals, yet they show no moral concern in letting them watch or take part in the mistreatment of animals. Rodeos are public spectacles widely recognized and backed by documented proof of the severe mistreatment of animals. Certain events in rodeos are rooted in agricultural practices that, in that context, require an animal to be physically restrained to, for example, undergo a medical



Father fakes a squirrel kill and then mom praises the child for doing a good job. [Youtube](#) screen shot

procedure. In rodeo events animals are brutally abused and taken down so cowboys can win prizes, have fun, and compete.

While eating popcorn and munching on waffle pops, young children, in the company of their parents, sit in the stands, laughing and applauding, while witnessing animals ridden against their will, violated, assaulted, thrown in the air, and slammed to the ground, fracturing bones, causing concussions, and crushing spirits.

Are We Creating More Future Criminals?

Extensive research indicates that children exposed to violence are themselves prone to increased violent thoughts

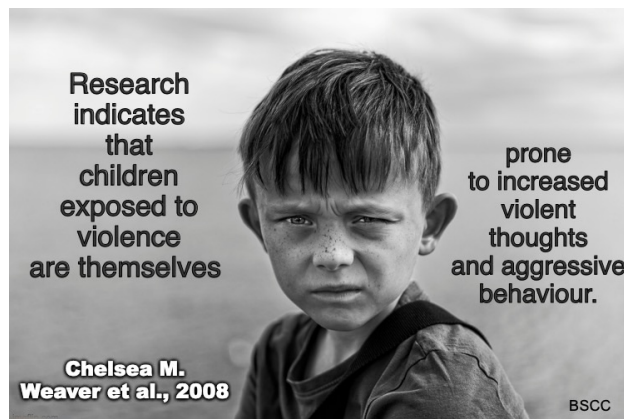


Image credit: Artur Skoniecki/pexels

and aggressive behaviour. (*Chelsea M. Weaver et al., 2008*)³ Cold hearts and violent outbursts are not conducive to leading rich, rewarding, and meaningful lives. One thing we can be sure of is that the skills and lessons children learn early on, they will use as adults. The empathically challenged will leave their mark wherever they go. A child's out-of-control aggression, when allowed to fester, will not stop at squirrels.

The typical North American child digests an outrageous amount of TV violence, both fake and real, which already contributes to reactive violent behaviour in children. The film industry is obligated to display warnings when the content of their product is troubling and not age appropriate, such as depicting sex scenes, foul language, and violence.

Youngsters and teens exposed to hunting and rodeos, however, witness brutality firsthand, right before their eyes, in real time with actual victims. They observe animals vocalizing in fear, trying to flee in terror, eyes bulging with pain, tongues hanging out, and gasping for breath in obvious, extreme distress, perpetrated by people they know and may even depend on for their safety. This can cause a troubling dissonance in the mind of a child. That is a whole different level of damage than watching television. Yet, no age limits or bans on participation or attendance are required. This spectacle is sold to the public as merely innocent fun and an exciting day of entertainment.

Fun or Child Abuse?

The same parents who attend rodeos with their children may also enroll them in “games” that emulate bronco events such as “Mutton Busting” competitions. In the article titled “These Photos of Terrified Toddlers Riding Angry Sheep are Hilarious,” mutton busting is described as “...a high stakes children’s ride where small [children are bucked and trampled](#) by angry ewes while their doting parents watch.”⁴

Children as young as three years old ride on the backs of sheep and try to hang on for as long as they can. The older children participate in calf riding and roping and mini bulls which are mostly used by the teens.

Restraining and roping an animal around the neck inflicts anxiety, fear, and serious enough injuries to

warrant euthanasia (Sylvia Dixon et al. 2023).^{5 6} When a grown man savagely restrains and ropes a calf, serious injuries are almost guaranteed. Despite how brutal these activities are for animals, they can be just as harmful to the children. The psychological harm imposed on 3-to 6 year olds may not be immediately evident but can potentially impact them for years. The significant physical harm possible in “mutton busting” (Rebecca J. Schultz, Jason Z. Amaral et al., 2025)⁷ is immediately clear; if not through injuries sustained, then through the waiver that parents are required to sign.



Are these the faces of children having fun? A four year old doesn't have capacity to give informed consent. Image credit: Top left Kelley Humphrey, Brainerd Dispatch, Image 2 and 3 John Davis, American News

The teens riding mini-bulls sustain injuries that can leave them permanently disabled. A US study (Mathias B. Forester, BS, 2021)⁸ identified during a nineteen-year period between 2000 and 2019, a total of 408 adolescent rodeo related injuries were treated at emergency centers. Data showed the adolescent patients were mostly male between 13 and 19 years old. The injuries included lacerations, fractures, and concussions. Bulls were involved in 58.4% of the injuries and horses in 28.8%. The injuries sustained resulted from falling, being thrown, being stepped on, or kicked by animals. For the same period the national estimate of total rodeo-related injuries was 17,363. These are only the injuries reported and treated in emergency departments.

In a Canadian study (Dale J. Butterwick, MSc et al.),⁹ it is indicated that rodeo competitor fatalities and severe injuries appeared to disproportionately affect competitors who are 17 years or younger during bull riding or junior bull riding events. Other sources also suggest serious injuries seem higher in competitors 19 years old or younger, likely due to lack of experience. As is currently understood, neuronal maturity isn't achieved until well into the 20s. Another reason government needs to help protect children by stepping up and enacting bans and restrictions.

A revealing [NBC News article](#)¹⁰ states rodeo owner Mike Vergari ticks off his grandkids' injuries like top grades on a report card. "It's not a matter of when you get hurt. It's a matter of how bad you get hurt," Vergari, founder of the Texas Youth Bull Riders, told NBC News. The article continues that, the 13-year-old boy had a broken foot, elbow, and wrist—and a severe concussion, to boot. The 6-year-old girl busted an arm when the sheep she was riding slipped on some wet ground and flew into a fence. These are injuries that can leave serious health consequences for a person throughout their life. Yet, it's as if the more injuries a child sustains, the more pride their parents and grandparents feel. By 18, with their boy nursing a few more concussions, college is going to hurt too. Some traditions need to become nothing more than memories.

The parents claim it is the teens who choose to participate, but they have been proselytized into a dangerous lifestyle since they were toddlers. It's a contagion, passed from adult to child. Kids often feel obligated and pressured to perform to impress and please their parents. Three and four year-olds, despite being scared, blindly trust their parents and therefore just do as they say. It renders the children as helpless as the animals. It has been stated parents who intentionally put their children in peril's way erroneously repeat what they were taught, believing they are doing the child good, instilling work ethic, determination, and showing them what real masculinity looks like.

Causing Pain And Suffering is a Crime, Or Is It?

Veterinarian [Peggy W. Larson, DVM, MS, JD](#),¹¹ states in the publication “Animal People Forum,” *“I can confidently say that rodeo is a cruel and archaic form of entertainment that should be outlawed.”* She further reports that veterinarians



Horse trying to escape being ridden.
Animals show signs of fear
bellowing, weaving, kicking and
trembling. Bulls, Bronc & Barrels, BC
Canada Image: Jordan Rivers, We
Animals

who perform autopsies and examinations on animals used in rodeos find muscle, ligament, tendon tears, thyroid and trachea damage. Bulls and horses have had their legs, backs, and necks broken and suffered cardiac arrests.

Before a rodeo even takes place, animals endure hours of agony during trial and error practice sessions. Peggy W. Lawson also writes, “In the practice pens, these calves are roped over and over until they can no longer be used in rodeos. Some die, some are sent to slaughter, and some go into feedlots.”

Rodeo animals suffer far crueler treatment and endure more prolonged suffering than a hunted animal, which, if lucky, never sees the end coming and is killed instantly with the first shot. That is apart from the excruciating torture inflicted by the leg-hold trap.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence, rodeo associations persist in denying the obvious. They claim the animals in rodeos are not forced but willing athletes. They compare their tradition of rodeo to that of any other sport, such as hockey or baseball,¹² ignoring that the individuals involved in hockey and baseball are consenting, willing participants. They assert that hot shots (electric shocks) and flank straps are not painful but merely feel like tickles. This is the same falsehood that promoters of shock collars have claimed for decades regarding shock collars manufactured for dogs and cats. Unfortunately, we are unable to biologically alter the horse, dog, or cat as they have so casually rebranded the electrical shock as a “tickle.” Altering the name does not diminish the pain and fear an animal experiences.

Canine shock collar and fence manufacturer Radio Systems Corporation resolved a class action lawsuit for a \$1.9 million settlement. The lawsuit claimed

they misrepresented their products for decades, claiming that their shock collars were safe, pain-free, and harmless for dogs and cats. This is despite the massive amount of evidence that shock collars and shock fences can, and have, caused significant burns, infections, pain, and emotional and psychological suffering. The Power Mite electric hot shots/prods also cause significant pain, but the manufacturer of hotshots does not condone or support their use in rodeos, on horses, or for entertainment purposes. Countless witnesses and [video evidence](#) clearly show rodeo participants disrespectfully ignoring this advice.



This easily concealed electric prod can generate a staggering 4,000 to 5,000 volts of sheer pain. In rodeos they are used on horses confined in pens to torture them into bucking and appearing wild. Image credit: [Shark, Showing Animals Respect & Kindness.](#)

When an organization lies about one thing, is anything they say credible? As stated by veterinarian Peggy Lawson, veterinarians who perform autopsies and examinations of animals used in rodeos show muscle, ligament, and tendon tears, thyroid, and trachea damage. Bulls and horses have had their legs, backs, and necks broken and have suffered cardiac arrest. Further, multiple studies and evidence clearly indicate that rodeo calves suffer potential fear, stress, and painful, even fatal, injuries when forced to the ground, dragged, and roped. ("Special Report on Rodeo"1974)

“Faith is Believing What You Know Ain’t So” - Mark Twain

Anyone with a nervous system and eyes knows full well that when animals are thrown to the ground, resist, cry out, are electrically shocked, or have their organs squeezed, they are being terrorized and are in pain. In rodeo, dominance is the name of the game. Animals have no choice, no control, and no escape. It’s obvious, it’s shameful, and yet certain people take pleasure in watching it.

Rodeo culture has succeeded in convincing some that brutalizing animals is not cruelty and bullying but awe-inspiring entertainment deserving of praise and applause. Grown men employing irritants like flank straps, spurs, and prods to make gentle horses buck so they look skilled and courageous riding them, is frankly sad. Everyone loves a good show to be awed and entertained. Cirque du

Soleil, for instance, fits that bill; a truly awe-inspiring display of genuine talent deserving of praise and applause.

It has been noted that [horses so gentle children ride](#) them unattended, can, however, when tormented with a prod or pain inducing flank strap will buck enough to put on what is considered a good spectacle. One could argue that the brave cowboy act of taking on the wild, unpredictable beast is a performance in more ways than one. Parallel is the hunter, assisted by his guide, laser rangefinder, tracking binoculars, and long-range rifles, who revels in his feigned bravado in taking down an unsuspecting animal that is loafing in his habitat.



Men torment chase, rope calves and slam animals to the ground by stopping their bodies and twisting their heads violently with taut ropes. Utah State fairgrounds Image Credit: Wes Burdett, We Animals

Observation: Websites offering stock images are saturated with visuals of rodeo animal mistreatment and trophy hunting spoils. It's telling to observe that these images can be shown publicly because there is no concern of a legal response or animal cruelty charges being filed.

When the Truth is Off Limits, There is a Price to Be Paid for Telling It.

Rodeo participants are threatened when their old-school traditional tools and inhumane treatment of animals are challenged. When a man named Monty Roberts tried to introduce a kinder way of breaking horses,¹³ many within the culture not only were closed off to his more humane methods but also felt so threatened by them that they became invested in trying to malign and discredit him personally.

In various sectors, to protect people's livelihoods and reputations a "code of silence" exists. It essentially normalizes wrongdoing and abuse of power by people and groups. The intentional concealment of everything from minor violations to outright blatant corruption can occur in any setting. Violations become insider secrets, fostering even more collusion and loyalty within the group. These become toxic environments where people who condone or engage in despicable conduct are known, tolerated, and even welcomed. Those who don't go along can face retaliation. In certain worlds, trying to instill a better way can make you a target.

Rodeo veterinarians, like all veterinarians, pledge an oath to do no harm; however, a vet on the payroll of a rodeo who covers up pain, suffering, and death that occurs is betraying their oath and is therefore misusing their title. A topic generally off limits but needs addressing anyway. If a veterinarian can't prioritize the welfare of the animals they are charged with caring for and are concealing or minimizing knowledge of animal abuse and negligence, their licenses should be revoked. Their continued employment only serves to taint an honourable profession. Without enforcement an association's rules are meaningless.

As for anti-cruelty legislation, it's unclear, even to law enforcement, if and for whom it applies. The Calgary Stampede's chuckwagon races, steer roping, and



bronco riding annually put animals at risk of fatal injuries. From 1986 to 2019, the Calgary Stampede has racked up at least 110 [animal fatalities](#), mostly horses.¹⁴ The actual numbers are higher, as not all animal injuries or deaths are reported or even acknowledged.

Horses who attempt to evade torment from flank straps, spurs, electric prods often buck in distress, fear, and pain. Audiences are often unaware of all the tactics used so applaud the abuse. Image Skye Ryan Evans

Internal hemorrhaging, concussions, fractured limbs can be ignored and left for nature to heal. Records of anyone being prosecuted for causing unnecessary pain, suffering, and injury in rodeo events seem non-existent. Does this indicate

that an animal's suffering and loss of life, because it took place during a rodeo event, makes it merely another "generally accepted practice?" The lack of empathy shown for a hurt or deceased animal is an unspoken instruction to children watching that it's okay for animals to die for our entertainment.

Childhood Trauma Doesn't Stem From Not Getting the Pony You Wished For.

The trauma of seeing animals suffer (Kelly L. Thompson and Eleonora Gullone, 2006) can invoke a wide range of emotional reactions in a child: depression, irritability, nightmares, chronic fatigue, and a generally more paranoid outlook overall. Highly sensitive children are at a greater risk for both short and long term emotional distress. Initially, numbing serves as protection, creating a personal refuge from the horror of what one may be experiencing. If a child, even within the same family as another child who has learned to love hunting or the rodeo experience, doesn't feel the same way, they can appear unshaken by the experience because they internalize their discomfort. They may do this to avoid disappointing or raising the wrath of those who do enjoy watching these spectacles.

We will always need child protection laws because there will always be those people who choose to, are persuaded to, or are taught to trivialize the feelings of sensitive children and instead conspire to "toughen them up." We know children are susceptible to pressure and go along to get along. A child may even feel responsible and take on feelings of guilt and shame for what they see or are encouraged to do. Each new exposure arouses their revulsion and can deepen their trauma. On the other hand, chronic, repeated exposure can eventually "toughen them up" but not in a healthy adaptive way. Consistent exposure undeniably reinforces in children, without a word spoken, it is acceptable and normal for animals to suffer and die for our entertainment.



In whose eyes is this not animal abuse?
Image Sean Robertson/Unsplash

Their young minds, bodies, and souls are still struggling to make sense of the world. Children need guidance and protection from adults who engage in toxic behaviour. They need time to be children. Leaving it to the wiring of child logic to make sense of what they see as disturbing is neglect on the part of their caregivers. When a parent eventually realizes the damage they have caused, it's too late for second chances. It is clear children require greater protection than they are currently provided with by their government.

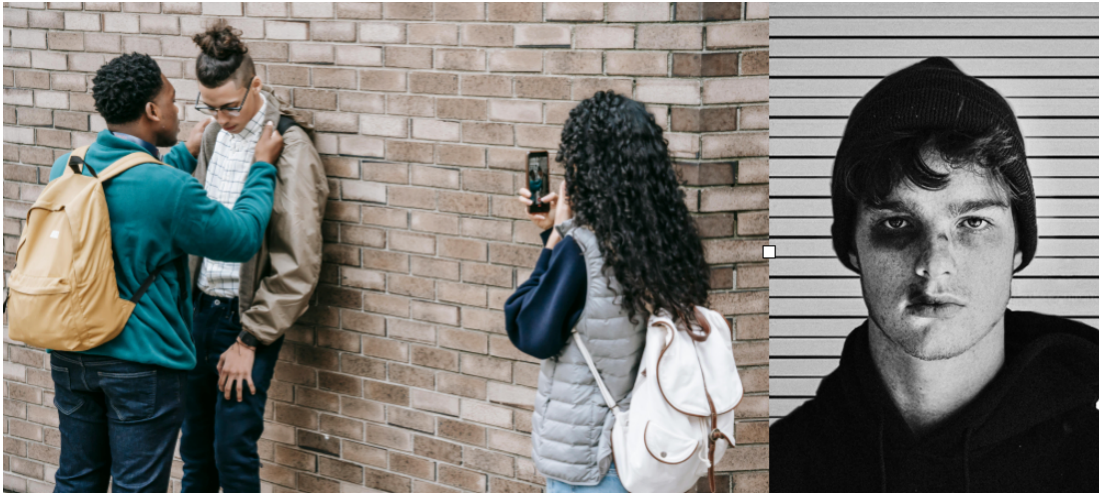
We may think we choose how to live our lives. Yet, many of us have been born into, molded, and entrenched in the lifestyle we are living and desire something different for our children. Cowboys and hunters are not slackers; they are often up for challenges and with a shift in focus, they can succeed at anything they want to do. Taking the skills of what they do and demonstrating to their children how to apply them in different ways can be highly empowering and rewarding for both. A hobby in target sports, mountain climbing, a career in animal behaviour, or work with search and rescue teams all involve time in nature and natural settings, which would appeal to a child who loves being outdoors. Parents need to ask themselves: Did we welcome our children into this world to spread darkness, to fight the world, or live peacefully within it?

Would You Know If Your Child is a Bully?

Hardened children and sensitive children all attend school together. This mix of individuals with still developing brains and radically different backgrounds can be a formula for a bully rich environment.

Recent surveys report teachers assert student violence is steadily increasing in their workplace.^{15 16} Middle school teachers report they are facing hostile actions on a daily basis. If teachers are experiencing violence in the classroom, it follows that students are also experiencing hostility from fellow students.

That brings us to school shootings. The K-12 School Shooting Database shows that in 2025 there were 148 victims of US school shootings, a relatively low number in comparison to recent previous years.¹⁷ When a tragedy like a school shooting occurs, we often ask how this could have happened. The prospect that a child growing up digesting excessive amounts of TV violence, as is common across North America, possibly being a victim themselves at some point, participating in violent sports, and having access to firearms culminates into a thuggish response as a way to cope with their frustration and anger is not a stretch.



Which is your child, the bully or the victim? Image left: Keira Burton; Image right: Ferreira/Unsplash

Early data for 2025 estimates that 1,256 parents of children 0-17 years will have to deal with the crushing heartbreak of having their child's life cut short due to "unintentional" gun related incidents.¹⁸ For decades, firearms have been the leading cause of death for children and teens in the USA. If the firearm had been stored properly or never been available in the first place, it wouldn't have fired by accident.

Our laws are not adequately keeping children shielded from guns, domestic violence, abuse, blood sports, and other societal harms. If parents can't or won't protect their children, then the government must intervene. They need to fulfill their protective role for children, as they do with other legislation that safeguards children from industries and what is considered for adults only.

In Canada, you can't buy alcohol, tobacco, or gamble until you are 18 or 19; in the US, it is 21. You can't drive until you're 16; in the US, the age range is 16-18. It's a mystery why societies that support laws and guidelines for these activities neglect to impose similar laws to prevent toddlers and children from participating in activities that can disrupt the emotional development of their brains.

Is it truly less harmful when a child harms or kills an animal during a hunt or rodeo event than when a child surreptitiously maims or kills a pet or wild animal in their backyard or garage? The latter scenario calls for police involvement and psychological intervention, with worries that the offending child is deeply troubled. It prompts questions about what is contributing to that child's aggression and anger.

How many of us have heard a person who straps or spansks their children, when appealed to, say, “I was walloped regularly when I was a kid, and look at me, I turned out okay,” as they aggressively hit, hurt, force, demean, and humiliate their child in public? Few of us can truly evaluate our own behaviour objectively. We all enter this world under such different circumstances that we might as well be from different planets. Regardless of where we exist on the planet, the one thing it seems we’ve all been systematically conditioned to believe is normal is our reckless utilization of animals.

Cruel Traditions Need to Adapt or Be Banned

Cruel “traditions” need to adapt to higher ethical standards to ensure the health and welfare of the people and animals involved. Instead, the cruelty is excused as cultural inheritance, and society and the law cooperatively turn a blind eye to it, even when children and animals are harmed. Nevertheless, traditions do eventually fall out of favour when they are recognized as morally questionable, outdated, and protested. Given that the majority of people in North America do not hunt, participate in rodeos, and detest trophy hunting and animal cruelty, what is keeping sport hunting and rodeos alive? It’s the money, stupid.



Screenshot: TrophyCruelty [YouTube video](#)

Hunting and rodeo groups strive to [glamorize their brutality](#)¹⁹ even though their activities alienate them from broader society. Agribusiness and pro-gun organizations, major corporations, and certain individuals exploit this division to encourage these groups to believe their lifestyles are stylish and beneficial to them. Amplifying this division through marketing, campaigning, magazines, TV shows, and exhibitions it encourages hunters and rodeo communities, and persuades some young people who simply love the idea of cowboy hats and line dancing to become even more loyal to their groups, further alienating them from the greater population.

Handsomely paid lobbyists sell the hunters’ fallacious reasons for their joy in killing as a cultural right, conservation, population control, and culling the sick to

end suffering, all in respect of their reverence for animals and nature. Rodeo promoters deny they harm animals and that hot shots and flank straps just tickle. Despite all the restraining equipment used on animals, they claim the animals are all willing athletes. It's all insulting hype and an excuse for taking pleasure in behaviour most of us consider repugnant and inhumane. Hunters and rodeo enthusiasts have a captive audience; their children, whom they instil with the persistence to carry on with this lifestyle as the quintessential way to live, keeping these so called "sports" alive.²⁰

Hunters spend billions of dollars in pursuit of their sport: firearms, ammunition, specialized clothing, equipment, licenses, firearms expos, travel packages, and hotels. The same applies to rodeos; it is also a billion-dollar industry with corporations cashing in on Western rodeo gear, riding equipment, trailers, event ticket sales, food, alcohol, merchandise, cowboy boots, buckles, and souvenirs. Then there are the sales of devices used to evoke fear and pain, including ropes for hobbling or restricting movement, whips, chemical irritants, flank straps, bits, spurs, electric prods, and hot shots.

Government Has a Duty to Protect: Children Should Not Be Easy Prey

The influx of cash amassed by corporations from hunting and rodeo consumers helps to generously fund lobbyists who are well connected and politically savvy. Their power and influence see to it that humane and transparent animal welfare legislation is blocked and that the government supports their activities with agricultural gag laws to silence voices and hide animal cruelty from the public. Recommendations and guidelines introduced as substitutes for laws are empty platitudes. The blocking of broader laws also leaves the door open for various animal exploiters to evade responsibility: exporters of horses for slaughter; cruel, unnecessary experimentation on animals; operators of puppy mills; hunters' use of leg-hold traps; factory farms that mutilate, brand, and cruelly confine farm animals; and the inhumane disposal of animals that no longer perform well, including racehorses, rodeo animals, and sled dogs. These animals are left unprotected, exempt, or ignored, or their mistreatment is classified as a "generally accepted practice."

North Americans are grateful for government representatives, past and present, who advocate for humane and ethical bills and speak out for animals. We need more representatives that value lives over business. We can still keep a quality standard of living and respect lives. Their work is all the more exceptional

because they must contend with their colleagues, career politicians who are pro-exploitation and who routinely oppose them. Corporate puppets have no qualms about aiding in the destruction of the natural world by weakening laws that protect it. If governments are unable or unwilling to enact and enforce anti-cruelty laws and prevent the exploitation of animals in hunting and rodeos, surely they can at least create laws that would protect children.

How frustrating for law enforcement and animal welfare organizations that work tirelessly yet can't generate convictions in clear-cut animal cruelty cases due to intentional loopholes, absent, or ambiguous laws. The research is abundant and clear on the connection between violence, hunting, child neglect and mistreatment, blood sports, animal cruelty, domestic violence, and sexual abuse²¹ all of which perpetuate a systemic, intergenerational cycle of violence. These and other criminal acts are multiple times more likely to be committed by adults who were exposed to violence as children. The cost to society is staggering.

This Isn't Just a Problem, It's a Disaster

Research estimates that the economic burden faced by Canadians associated with child maltreatment is estimated at 100 billion dollars annually (Sarah J. Dow-Fleisner, 2020)²² and that one out of three Canadians experiences some form of child abuse, interestingly, Manitoba and Alberta lead the way.

Research from the University of Calgary analyzed 70,000 domestic violence reports (2011-2014) associated with sporting events, including the Calgary Stampede. "Alberta ranked the third-highest self-reported rate and the fourth-highest police-reported rate of domestic violence in Canada, with Calgary showing consistent growth. Violence costs Alberta taxpayers a minimum of 100 million dollars per year for basic services for victims." It would be reasonable to hypothesize that domestic violence is also higher than the average in other territories where rodeos and violent sports are prevalent.

Still, the federal government helps fund the Calgary Stampede²³ with millions of taxpayers' dollars, despite its long record of inattention to the welfare of children. For 36 years, a Calgary Stampede employee managed to

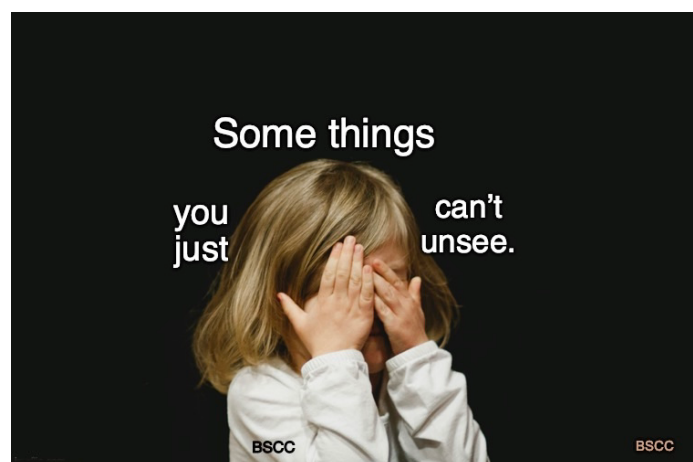


Image: Caleb Woods

victimize boys who were members of a school operated by the Calgary Stampede Foundation - literally for decades. In a LiveWire Calgary article in July 2023, MP George Chahal echoed what so many Canadians (including Albertans) thought: “Yesterday’s admission of liability by the Calgary Stampede is not a sign of transparency or accountability. Rather, it is a testament to the lengths the organization was willing to go to sweep these horrific crimes under the rug.”²⁴ The Stampede has denied wrongdoing for years. Despite the overwhelming [evidence](#),²⁵ in full view for everyone to see, rodeo culture continues to deny compromising the health and welfare of animals and people.

"Animal and child welfare experts argue that government-sanctioned exposure of children to brutal violence may be a form of psychological violence against youth (Gullone and Plant 2014; Tedeschi 2014). Hence, if governments choose to condone, be complicit in, or ignore this violence exposure, despite having knowledge of the dire psychological and social consequences for youth exposed to this cruelty, it can be argued that their actions (or inaction) constitute a violation of basic human rights." (Roshni Trehan Ladny, Laura Meyer, 2019).²⁶ Yet, here we are in 2026, and despite our governments and legal systems having a duty to protect children and animals, they are, it would appear, failing them both.

Gwendy Williams, Anti-cruelty Advocate, 2026
BanShockCollars.ca
British Columbia Canada

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