

## Communication from Public

**Name:** David Gershwin  
**Date Submitted:** 09/25/2023 08:59 AM  
**Council File No:** 20-1575  
**Comments for Public Posting:** Please see the attached communication from the Western Sports Industry Coalition rebutting incorrect and misleading claims in a recently-posted ALDF flyer.

# WESTERN SPORTS INDUSTRY COALITION

## Rebuttal to Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) Flyer Submitted to Council File

*Text of ALDF flyer is verbatim, and what follows is the Western Sports Industry Coalition (WSIC) response*

### **Will this affect other equestrian activities in my district, such as horseback riding, show jumping?**

**ALDF:** “No. This is a narrowly-focused ordinance that is specifically regarding rodeo and rodeo-type activities, as clearly defined by the L.A. City Attorney”

**WSIC:** ALDF’s assertion is 100% FALSE. The proposed ordinance bans sharpened or fixed spurs or rowels and provides no clear exemption for equestrian activities. The spurs and rowels used in rodeo events are dull, and rotate freely. Spurs and rowels used in other equestrian sports can be sharpened and are often fixed. ALDF, along with the authors of the proposed ordinance, lack a fundamental understanding of rodeo equipment and how it is used in practice.

### **What about the cultural impact?**

**ALDF:** “A poll by Lincoln Park Strategies [sic] behalf of Last Chance for Animals revealed that 72 percent of registered Los Angeles voters surveyed support banning prods, flank straps, and other tools that force animals to perform. The poll showed strong support across all demographic groups, including 70 percent approval among Black respondents and 67 percent among Latino respondents. Link to survey: <https://lpstrategies.com/la-survey-2022> “

**WSIC:** In regard to this claim, Lincoln Park Strategies simply polled the effectiveness of various arguments made by those seeking to ban rodeos. It did not ask open-ended questions about whether or not people believed that rodeo events were allegedly harmful to animals. This is known as a “push poll,” designed specifically to elicit specific responses from those surveyed. In addition to this poll’s transparent bias, it uses blatant falsehoods when making these arguments in favor of banning rodeo events. Prods are only used in the event that an animal is endangering themselves or another human – they are NOT used to “force animals to perform.” Flank straps, made of fleece, leather, or soft cotton rope, are tied around the abdomen of an animal and do not harm the animal in any way. Flank straps simply signal the animal, who is bred to buck, to buck. Other tools used in rodeo events, including lassos and lariats, are used to bring animals to safety during various events.

### **Concerns with cultural impact, cont’d**

**ALDF:** “Mexico City recently banned bullfighting per their constitution and cock-fighting is illegal in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and all U.S territories despite those activities’ deep cultural ties”

**WSIC:** Where do we begin? Our members hold RODEO events, and do not participate in bullfighting or cock-fighting. These other activities have no bearing or relationship to rodeo events whatsoever. We can only assume ALDF is grasping at straws due to the fact that it lacks a rational argument to make its case.

### **Concerns with cultural impact, cont’d**

**ALDF:** “A recent opinion piece in the local Argonaut News, “Compassionate Latinos Condemn Charreada Cruelty” by Marco Antonio Regil, details the abuses of Charreada and explains how most Latinos don’t want to see animals be tormented. In his words, ‘The opinions of a small minority of rodeo and charreada enthusiasts should not outweigh those of the overwhelming majority of people who condemn cruelty to animals.’”

## WESTERN SPORTS INDUSTRY COALITION

[https://www.argonautnews.com/opinion/compassionate-latinos-condemn-charreada-cruelty/article\\_f6796c7a-a299-11ed-8139-87feeca11615.html](https://www.argonautnews.com/opinion/compassionate-latinos-condemn-charreada-cruelty/article_f6796c7a-a299-11ed-8139-87feeca11615.html)

**WSIC:** Television host Marco Antonio Regil is certainly entitled to his own opinion in his piece, but he is not entitled to his own facts. Regil incorrectly asserts that rodeo events cause “pain inflicted by barbaric devices such as flank straps, spurs, and electric prods.” Flank straps, as we have said before, are made of fleece, leather, or soft cotton rope, and do not harm the animal in any way. Spurs used in rodeo events are dull and rotate freely. Electric prods, which are already governed by existing state law in California Penal Code 596.7, may only be used if the animal or another animal or human is in danger. Furthermore, prods may not be used once the animal has entered the chute. The draft ordinance is written so poorly that it ONLY allows prods to be used in the chute – a potentially dangerous situation where animals would have nowhere to move.

**Are there other jurisdictions in CA that have rodeo ordinances? What about in other parts of the country?**

**ALDF:** Yes, the California communities of Pasadena, San Francisco, Chino Hills, Laguna Woods, Irvine, and Napa County prohibit rodeos. Leestown, VA; Pittsburgh, PA & Southhampton, NY prohibit flank straps, electric prods, spurs. Fort Wayne, IN & St. Petersburg, FL prohibit rodeos. For a more complete list:

<https://www.animallaw.info/intro/rodeos> & <https://sharkonline.org/index.php/animal-cruelty/rodeo-cruelty/755-locations-with-prohibitions-or-restrictions-on-rodeos-or-rodeo-events>

**WSIC:** In California, Alameda County recently voted *against* banning rodeos, asserting, as do we, that we face far more important priorities than seeking to ban a sport that treats animals safely and humanely. We could also point out that Los Angeles, with tens of thousands of homeless people lining sidewalks and freeway underpasses, has a long way to go in providing safe and humane living conditions for all.

Our coalition members treat our animal athletes like they are members of the family. Rodeo provides kids and families with positive, structured activities that foster independence, athleticism, tradition, and teamwork. We hope that the Los Angeles City Council will take the time to actually understand how all rodeo equipment is used safely and humanely.

**ALDF:** “Rodeos use docile farm animals (namely horses, bulls, steers, calves). These animals must be provoked so that they act ‘wild,’ ‘rank,’ ‘untamed.” Provocation occurs with manmade instruments, causing these animals to behave in unnatural and/or exaggerated manners, which places them at grave risk of injury or death. This is precisely what this ordinance is focused on.”

**WSIC:** Animals in rodeo events are not “provoked” in any way – these animals in rodeo events are specifically bred to buck. Before and after each 8-second performance over the course of a weekend, they are given the utmost care and pampering, and are prized animals for those who perform with them. Additionally, horses and cattle of all ages buck and play when they are in herds – it is routine behavior for them.

**ALDF Photos of Bushwacker the Bull:** depicting Bushwacker resting, and performing in rodeo events, with arrows pointing to the flank strap.

**WSIC:** Bushwacker, the most famous bucking bull in PBR history and featured on the cover of *ESPN The Magazine’s* “Body” issue, is now happily retired, enjoying a pastoral life. Were Bushwacker not a

# WESTERN SPORTS INDUSTRY COALITION

legendary bucking bull, he would have wound up in the food chain, on a dinner plate at a burger joint or steakhouse near you before he was three years old. The flank strap, as we have explained before, is a soft cotton rope that does not harm a bull in any way whatsoever. A bull's hide is seven times as thick as human skin, and the flank strap, as we have pointed out before, simply signals the bull it is time to buck. PBR is proud of Bushwacker's illustrious career, where he spent a total of 8 or 16 seconds each weekend performing in rodeo events nationwide, all while receiving the very best in the way of food, exercise and care.

## About the WSIC

The Western Sports Industry Coalition is a diverse group of over 60 western sports industry leaders including Professional Bull Riders (PBR), Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, Compton Cowboys, the California Charro Association, National Buffalo Soldiers, California Circuit Finals Pro- Rodeo – which represents over 40 rodeos in California – and the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA). Our organization is a collective voice, presenting knowledge, experience, and legitimate, objective research to lawmakers to preserve and protect the future of western sports events and cultural traditions and to substantiate the industry's unified commitment to the welfare of animals.

