

'Bred to be abused': Vet critical after death of rodeo horse at CWA

Horse put down after injury at rodeo sparks outrage from a former competitor

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Chris Lane almost made it through his first Canadian Western Agribition without a scratch, but the death of animal on his first watch as CEO cut pretty deep.

"There's no question that the people that care about and care for animals like the people at Agribition and rodeo folks, it hits them the hardest," Lane Friday, the day after a rodeo horse had to be put down.

A 10-year-old horse, Seven Rusty Rain, owned by the Alberta rodeo company C5, was euthanized after suffering a neck or spinal injury during a bareback event Thursday evening.

"This is pretty rare, even at Agribition here," Lane said. "I think the last time this would have happened was 19 or 20 years ago, so it's not something that happens a lot. It's really uncommon."

Former competitor critical of rodeo events

But a large animal veterinarian and former rodeo competitor in the United States says rodeo animal injuries and death are not as uncommon as those in the business would have you believe.

Dr. Peggy Larson, originally from a farm in North Dakota, used to ride bareback broncs in the rodeo, but now she thinks the sport is cruel.

"There's so many things that go through a person's mind when you hear things like this because there are so many things that can happen," Larson said after learning about the death of a horse in Regina.

"It's not rare at all," she added. "If you look at all the rodeos that go on across the United States and Canada, injuries are not uncommon and unfortunately many of the injuries never get reported."

Lane, however, notes that the Agribition has measures in place to ensure animal safety.

"We have pretty constant vet check ups," he said. "Their job is to inspect those animals before and after they compete. If we hear about any kind of illness or injury to an animal during a competition, our head vet has the authority to pull that animal from competition."

"I've never seen any animals cared for as well as rodeo stock can be looked after," he added. "This is what they're bred and looked after, to do."

Larson takes issue with that. She says the idea that the animals are bred for rodeo "is like saying they're bred to be abused."

"I find that argument laughable and I've heard it before," she said, noting the treatment of calves in a rodeo event. "For instance, if you start with roping calves — that's really the easiest one — there's no question in anyone's mind that a 300-pound calf that gets jerked around like that is going to suffer injuries."

Larson also cited saddle bronc riding as an example of animal cruelty in rodeos.


"In order to qualify a ride you have to dig your spurs into that animal's shoulder for every jump for eight

seconds," she said. "That's like hammering a nail into an animal's shoulder."

Larson believes rodeos have no place in communities.

"Look at the message you are giving to kids who go to these rodeos, that it's OK to do this."

The 2016 Canadian Western Agribition wraps up Saturday with the final event of its pro rodeo competition.

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