

# “Horse Sense”

Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #1  
*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

## Head Injury Study Gives Sound Guidance

by Brian Helander RN, CEN, MHSA

Recently-published research by the *American Academy of Neurology* shows those athletes who suffer two consecutive concussions (loss of consciousness a.k.a. LOC or getting “knocked out”) within 48 hours run a great risk of sudden death. This is the mechanism that experts believe is behind the mystery of athletes like college football players, who are otherwise healthy, suffering a catastrophic terminal event (“sudden death”) after back-to-back concussions.

Rodeo contestants and their friends and advisors should seriously consider the guidelines below when making a decision to participate in second go-round rough stock events following a concussion (“getting knocked out”) in the first go-round. These guidelines cover three grades of concussion (A), recommendations on treatment (B), and when it is considered safe to return to competition (C). Here is the *American Academy of Neurology* guidelines.

### A. Grades of Concussion.

Grade One: Transient confusion (no LOC, with inability to focus, maintain coherence).

Grade Two: Transient confusion (no LOC, with short-term amnesia).

Grade Three: Any loss of consciousness (LOC), brief or prolonged.

### B. Recommended Treatment.

Grade One: Remove from contest, examine immediately and every 5 minutes.

Grade Two: Remove from contest for remainder of day, examine often, see MD.

Grade Three: Go to ER if still unconscious, have thorough neurological exam.

### C. Safe to Return.

Grade One: Single episode: 15 minutes or less  
Multiple episodes: 1 week

Grade Two: One week

Grade Three: Brief LOC (“seconds”): One week  
Prolonged LOC (“minutes”): Two weeks  
Multiple grade three: One month or longer

In the case of an IGRA rough stock contestant, “remove from contest” may mean removal from rough stock riding events that could put a contestant at risk for a second episode of concussion, not necessarily “Goat Dressing” and other camp events or horse events that have a lower risk of concussion. □

# “Horse Sense”

Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #2  
*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

## The Use of Safety Equipment and Precautions by Rodeo Contestants

by Thom Sloan, IGRA Judge and Ex-Bronc Rider

Rodeo is a tough sport. Even those events that may seem harmless, such as Goat Dressing, have their own set of risks. There are a number of simple precautions that will assist all rodeo competitors in minimizing injury.

1. **Warm Up!** Always stretch before you begin competing. If you're Calf Roping on Foot in the morning, your body is not ready to throw and your shoulders and back will appreciate it if you take some time to do some simple stretches. Get an experienced rough stock rider to show you some and use them. Stretch for any rodeo event, but especially ones where you will be running or straining your muscles (let's see, that's every event!).

2. **Make Sure Your Equipment is in Good Condition!** Check all your equipment before competing and make sure it's in good condition. Are the ropes frayed or weak? Are any latigos in good condition and not showing excessive wear? Are your riggings adjusted and everything tightened the way it should be?

3. **Consider Using safety equipment.**

**Vests.** Many contestants have started using protective vests for rough stock and other events. A protective vest is padded with Kevlar® or some other material to help absorb the shock of a blow from hitting the ground or being stepped on/horned by an animal. Remember, the Wild Drag Race and Steer Decorating can be rough stock events depending on the stock! Vests can be expensive so you may need to borrow one from another contestant until you can afford to buy a custom-made one or buy one at a rodeo supply store (they can run between \$175 and \$500).

**Mouthpieces:** Mouthpieces are inexpensive and can save the repair of your teeth if you bite down on them too hard while riding or trying to mount a steer.

**Gloves:** For rough stock events they are a necessity! You'll also see contestants use gloves for Chute Dogging, Roping, and Steer Decorating.

**"Personal Protection."** It can be as simple as using ace bandages and tape to protect your hands, thighs, arms or any area of your body exposed to undue stress

in competition. For women, it can mean consideration of using a sports bra. Some contestants use spandex shorts (bike shorts) to protect their buttocks and thighs while riding. Men should consider using jock straps and protective cups. Many contestants use pads while riding in roping and horse events to protect their shins and knees. Braces can help support a weak knee, elbow, or ankle.

4. **For Bull, Steer, and Bronc Riders.** Get someone experienced to make sure you're sitting on the animal properly, that your rigging is on correctly, and that you have some idea of what to expect. Ideally, Bull and Bronc riders will come to IGRA rodeos with some training, but realistically, that doesn't always happen. Ask for help!
5. **Ask Someone Who Knows!** If you're new to rodeo, ask advice from an experienced contestant or official. One of the great things about IGRA and gay rodeo is that people are willing and ready to help you if you're new and have questions. No one will be upset or think less of you for asking a question. We'd rather you ask than get injured.
6. **And Finally, Read the Rules!** IGRA rules are written with your safety and the safety of our rodeo animals in mind. Read the *General Rodeo Rules* and the rules for the event(s) you'll be competing in. It could save you from unnecessary effort or acts that could lead to injury.□

**LET'S RODEO, BUT SAFELY!**

# “Horse Sense”

Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #3  
*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

## Ways to Beat the Rodeo Heat!

by Clark Monk BSN, TNCC, FNC

With the summer months upon us, rodeo takes on a whole new feel. The days may still be long but they are hot, hot, hot. With the rising temperatures comes the need for adequate hydration not only for us as contestants, but also for our animals.

Our bodies have two main ways of helping us keep cool during those hot days of roping and riding. The first is through dilation, whereby the body will actually dilate the blood vessels near the skin. During activities, this allows the blood that is heated at the core of the body to be radiated through the skin into the air. The second way of removing heat is by sweating. When sweat from the skin is evaporated, it gives up heat and thus cools the skin. These same methods work in our animals as well. With this in mind remember the most important tool needed for warm weather activities is proper hydration. Both of our body processes need water to make them work. Avoid caffeinated beverages like coffee and soda pop as they may inhibit your body's ability to cool itself.

The American College of Sports Medicine offers the following recommendations for those who are participating in outside sports and exposure to the sun.

1. Drink enough fluids to make your urine run clear (like lemonade in color, not amber like apple juice).
2. Drink about a pint of fluid two hours **before an event**.
3. Drink at least two glasses of fluid just before an event and two glasses after the event. Remember to replace what you have lost. If you drink only when you're thirsty, then you are already in a dehydrated state.
4. Eat properly the night before an event. Carb-loading is a good idea if you are going to be doing a lot of physical activity and meals during the day are minimal.
5. If you are able to eat between events, eat small portions of easily digestible, high-carbohydrate foods. Stay away from the high fats. They are harder to digest and may cause cramping during the activity. Foods high in carbohydrates are bananas, apples, raisins, dates, non-fat yogurt, bagels with low fat cream cheese, and energy bars.

Other ways to help beat the heat is to wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothes. I know this goes against all you cowboy and cowgirls better judgment. We know how you like those Wrangler butts, but loose and light allows proper evaporation from the skin. Also, you thought those hats were just for looks and rules? Wrong. Wearing a hat helps to protect your face from the scorching sun by providing shade. And don't forget the sun screen!

Take the time to prepare yourself for those long hot rodeo days. Be aware of your body's needs and make sure you eat and drink right. If you start feeling nauseated, weak, dizzy, or that you might pass out, you could be developing heat stroke or heat exhaustion. If this occurs, get into a shaded area immediately where it is cool and begin to re-hydrate. Electrolytes are lost through your sweat.

And let's not forget our animals. Just like you and I they need proper hydration and protection from the sun. Their bodies cool off just like ours. Make sure that your animals always have plenty of fresh water in front of them at all times. They too lose valuable electrolytes with sweating. Be sure that you have replacements for them as well as plenty of high protein and carbohydrate feed. Provide adequate shade whenever possible and allow them time to cool down after each event.

If you follow these simple guidelines, then you're ready to get out there and rodeo, no matter what the weather is like. You can "beat the heat" and keep on going!☐

# “Horse Sense”

Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #4  
*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

## Rough Stock Events: the Safety Person's Role

by Brian Helander RN, CEN, MHA

Each rough stock rider (Steer Riding, Bull Riding, and Bronc Riding) should have at least two helpers: one rigging-puller and one “safety” person. The “safety” person's role is key to providing a safe environment in the chute at all times, up until the animal and rider **leave the chute**. I stress, “leave the chute” because occasionally, an animal will not leave the chute, creating a dangerous situation for the rider. So the “safety” person is still “on duty” until either the gate closes or the animal moves out of the chute.

The “safety” person acts as the eyes and ears of the rider, who must focus on getting ready for his ride, rather than activity in the chute. The “safety” must be ready, willing, and **capable** of lifting the rider out of the chute and off the animal. The “safety” should monitor the animal for such things as bucking in the chute, head tossing, leaning or trapping the rider, going to the ground in the chute, or removing the rider when called for or when needed.

### There is a correct and incorrect way to “safety” for a rider.

- A. **Incorrect way** (less safe). Holding the rider by the **belt only** is not a safe way to begin. In the event that the rider needs to be “yanked” out of a dangerous situation, lifting by the belt only, may force the rider's upper body forward **into** the danger zone: near the animal's head. Other incorrect ways include: standing on the chute without contact with the rider, or supporting the rider under one arm.
- B. **The correct way** (safer). The “safety” should place one arm, full length, between the arms of the rider, placing the “safety's” hand on the rider's chest. The “safety's” arm should be **between** the rider's arms so the rider has **two** options:
  1. Being lifted out by the “safety” or
  2. Grabbing the “safety's” arm and lifting themselves out. Contact between the rider and “safety” should be the full length of the “safety's” arm, from palm to armpit at all times. **Only when this chest contact is in place, can the “safety” use his free hand to grasp the belt of the rider for additional leverage.** The “safety” should stay in place until the rider calls for the gate, and **actually** leaves the chute.

In Bronc Riding, it is additionally important that the second "safety" person, encourage the horses head to leave the chute first, by gently pushing the head to the arena side of the chute.

In Steer and Bull Riding, the "safety" should be prepared for the animal to pull the rider forward while in Broncs, the "safety" should be prepared for the horse to rear up **throwing the rider backwards, rather than forward.**

One final note, pay attention when you are acting as a "safety." The rider is counting on it!☐

# “Horse Sense”

## Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #5

*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

### **Stretching (Part I)...a better way to Rodeo**

by Clark Monk

The importance of performing a warm-up phase of activity and a flexibility program prior to engaging in rodeo activities for injury prevention has been well proven by both amateur and professional alike. Physiologically, a warm-up period of five minutes has proven to increase blood flow to the extremities and increase oxygenation of the working muscles. Increasing the intramuscular temperature reduces the likelihood of muscle, connective tissue or ligamentous damage by enhancing tissue elasticity. Elevated muscle temperature also increases the muscle's ability to tolerate stresses with a reduced level of strain. Not all the recommended exercises are easy and if you're not a beginner you should check your pulse even when warming up. Warm-up stretching should never increase your heart rate more than 10-15%. Nor should you ever push your body too far too fast past its present flexibility. Simply go through the movement up to the point you can reach without undue strain and then stop. The following exercises are only recommendations. I hope you all take the time to prepare yourself both physically as well as mentally before engaging in the sport of rodeo and allow your body the opportunity to perform to its utmost ability without the increased risk of injury.

#### ◆ **NECK STRETCH**

You get the most optimal ride when you're free of stress and tension so start by tuning up your neck muscles, since emotional uptightness concentrates there, preventing an obstacle to relaxed movement. Keeping your chin level, slowly turn your head to the right so that your chin is above your shoulder. Keeping the chin level, swivel your head slowly to the left until your chin is above that shoulder. Repeat this movement several times progressively stretching farther and farther each time. For the second part drop your chin to your chest, then slowly lift the chin and let your head drop back. Again repeat this movement stretching farther and farther each time.

#### ◆ **SHOULDER SHRUG**

Although the neck holds most of the tension the shoulder is directly connected and overflow stress rests on the shoulder as well. Place your feet approximately 18 inches apart and let your arms hang loosely to your side. Lift both shoulders into a tight shrug, as if trying to squeeze your neck. Hold this position for three to four seconds then relax allowing your arm to drop rapidly back to your side.



#### ◆ ELBOW IN THE EAR

With your left elbow raised and pointed upward, rest the fingertips of your left hand loosely atop your left shoulder. Crossing your other arm across your torso, clasp your side with your right hand. Raise your elbow as high as possible turning it slightly into your ear and hold for three to four seconds. Repeat same movement with the right arm. Repeat, several times, progressing the stretch each time.

#### ◆ TOE TOUCH

The hamstrings are prone to injury because of their location behind the usually more massive thighs, causing a muscular imbalance. With your feet closely together—separated by only 6 inches---and legs straight, keeping your back fairly rigid, bend forward from the waist, allowing your arms to hang parallel to your legs. Continue the stretch until you feel the pull. Do Not Try To Touch your Toes unless you are able. Hold the stretch for seven seconds return to neutral position and then repeat again.

These are only some suggested stretching exercises you may each have your own that you like but the important part is to remember to warm up those muscle and loosen them up before any rodeo event. Stretching only take a few moments but prevents a multitude of possible injuries in the future. Take the time to focus yourself and warm up those muscles, then hold on tight and rodeo hard.

**Look for the next issue of “Horse Sense” for Part II and more stretches.□**

# “Horse Sense”

## Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #6

*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee 2000*

### **Stretching (Part II)...a better way to Rodeo**

by Clark Monk

The importance of performing a warm-up phase of activity and a flexibility program prior to engaging in rodeo activities for injury prevention has been well proven by both amateur and professional alike.

Physiologically, a warm-up period of five minutes has proven to increase blood flow to the extremities and increase oxygenation of the working muscles. Increasing the intramuscular temperature reduces the likelihood of muscle, connective tissue or ligamentous damage by enhancing tissue elasticity. Elevated muscle temperature also increases the muscle's ability to tolerate stresses with a reduced level of strain. Not all the recommended exercises are easy and if you're not a beginner you should check your pulse even when warming up. Warm-up stretching should never increase your heart rate more than 10-15%. Nor should you ever push your body too far too fast past its present flexibility. Simply go through the movement up to the point you can reach without undue strain and then stop. The following exercises are only recommendations.

I hope you all take the time to prepare yourself both physically as well as mentally before engaging in the sport of rodeo and allow your body the opportunity to perform to its utmost ability without the increased risk of injury.

#### ◆ **STRADDLE STRETCH**

This exercise stimulates circulation throughout the body. It works out various muscles, stretching the spine for greater flexibility while firming the buttocks and inner thighs (and we all like that).

With your feet shoulder width apart, arms straight and hands clasped together behind your back, bend your body back from the waist. Slowly raise your body upright, lifting your arms at the same time, and bend forward while continuing to lift and rotate the arms until you are bent as far forward as possible and your arms are angled straight up behind your head, pointing to the sky. Now unclasp your hands and bring them around to the front. Clasp your hands again and with slightly bent knees bend at the waist and pull your arms between your legs until your hands are past your knees. Tense your abdominal and buttocks muscles and continue to force your arms back further. Hold for seven seconds.

#### ◆ **SIDE WINDER**

Seated on the floor, stretch your legs their widest without bending them. Raise your arms above your head with your elbows slightly bent. Without rotating your hips, turning only from the chest and shoulders, swivel your torso towards your tight thigh. Bending forward, stretch your arms as if to clasp your right foot. Lean your whole torso closer to your thigh and keep reaching for your foot, moving beyond it if possible. Return to the original position and repeat on the other side.

#### ◆ **PRAISE THE HEAVENS**

Kneeling on the floor with your knees together, sit with your buttocks on the ground, your feet just slightly wider than your hips. Slowly arch your back backwards, using your elbows for support. Lean backwards as far as you can to contemplate the heavens and picture that ride you're about to take. Pause, holding the position, sucking in your abdominal muscles and tighten your buttocks. Slowly raise yourself in fluid, not bouncing movement. Repeat and hold for a longer period. Repeat three to four time extending your hold with each repetition.

These are only some suggested stretching exercises you may each have your own that you like but the important part is to remember to warm up those muscle and loosen them up before any rodeo event. Stretching only take a few moments but prevents a multitude of possible injuries in the future. Take the time to focus yourself and warm up those muscles, then hold on tight and rodeo hard. □

# “Horse Sense”

Rodeo Health and Safety Newsletter #7

*from your IGRA Health and Safety Committee*

## **“Rodeo Contestant Injuries: Reporting and Trending by IGRA”**

by Brian Helander, RN, MHSA

IGRA is very interested in monitoring and evaluating rodeo event contestant injuries. In 2002, the IGRA Health and Safety Committee established a standard (voluntary) injury reporting tool to capture data related to contestant injuries. The reporting tool is anonymous and contains **no** contestant or reporter tracking information. All IGRA contestants and officials are encouraged to report injuries to the Health and Safety Committee. The reporting tool is available from the rodeo secretary, checklist trustee or on the IGRA Web site ([www.igra.com](http://www.igra.com)).

The reporting tool collects 14 data elements that are compiled, reviewed, and reported at the annual IGRA convention. The data elements are date, rodeo location, event, gender, contestant level, treatment, brief description of injury, prior injuries contributing to the injury, and rodeo contact information such as arena director and rodeo director. Injury trends and rates are reported at several times and at the annual convention.

The important point for all IGRA contestants, members and member associations is to make every effort to report injuries that occur to contestants. Duplicate reports are accepted and will be evident to the committee. Names of injured contestants are not collected and the reporting tool contains no personal information. The IGRA Health and Safety Committee strongly urge the reporting of any and all rodeo related injuries.

Ask your Trustee for more information or if you have any questions about “Rodeo Injuries Reported” to date. □

# VOLUNTARY IGRA RODEO INJURY REPORT

Revised: OCT 2004

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To: **Health and Safety Committee**  
**C/O IGRA**  
**900 East Colfax Avenue**  
**Denver, CO 80218**

Rodeo Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male:  Female:

Day: Saturday:  Sunday:  Event: \_\_\_\_\_ First Time in this Event? Yes  No

Contestant Level:  New Contestant  
 Novice (1<sup>st</sup> Yr.)  
 Experienced: (2<sup>nd</sup> Yr. +)

Event Level:  New Contestant  
 Novice (1<sup>st</sup> Yr.)  
 Experienced: (2<sup>nd</sup> Yr. +)

Please provide a brief description of the injury:

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Do you believe that a prior injury or condition contributed to the injury? Yes  No

Treatment Level Provided:  First Aid Only (Self care, IGRA member care, or non-professional care)  
 EMT/Paramedic or Professional Care: (On-site Ambulance Crew or on-site RN, MD, PA)  
 Hospital Care (includes Urgent Care Centers) (Treatment and Release)  
 Hospital Care (Inpatient Admission or Observation Admission)

Did the injury result in a fatality? Yes  No

Contact Information:

Arena Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Chute Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Stock Contractor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

*Health and Safety Committee Use Only:*

Injury type:  (1) Musculoskeletal injury  
 (2) Skin injury  
 (3) Nervous system injury  
 (4) Respiratory injury:  
 (5) Circulatory system injury

Injury Classification:  Severity Score 1  
 Severity Score 2  
 Severity Score 3

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Processed: \_\_\_\_\_

An injury is any disruption in the structure or function of the body secondary to a rodeo-related event.