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Dr. Mr. Stephenson,

It has come to my attention that AT&T, owner of AT&T Mobility (formerly Cingular Wireless), sponsors the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA). I respectfully ask AT&T to drop its endorsement of animal cruelty.

"Without torture, there can be no rodeo," claims Peggy W. Larson, DVM, MS, JD, a former bareback bronco rider who says horses and bulls buck wildly only because they are in pain from rigid flank straps and spurring. Rodeo handlers bully animals with electric prods, straps, spurs and tail twisting.

Their eyes bulge in terror. They wheeze and tremble. Some suffer for days before they are hauled to the slaughterhouse. While the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PCRA) and International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) allege compliance with animal welfare rules, graphic documentation tells a different story.

One cruelty investigator who records calf-roping "rehearsals" observes, "Without the noise of the crowd and announcer you can actually hear the calves' bodies slamming on the ground, and their choking and coughing after being clotheslined." As calves flee into the ring at speeds up to 27 miles per hour, the "cowboy" neck-chokes and smashes them into the ground. He typically body-slams them again for theatrical effect.

For bucking events, the horses' intestines and groins are cinched so tightly they lurch in response to the pain. Animals who won't buck are shocked with electric prods. Many careen into fences, posts or chutes.

In steer contests, a rider lassos a running, 700-pound steer and jerks the animal's head and neck in a 180-degree loop, pitching him into the dirt. The steer is tripped, tossed and lugged for 30 feet or more so the roper can subdue him and bind his legs for a score.

Animal welfare groups worldwide denounce rodeo's trail of busted bones, cracked skulls and severed spines. Please keep me informed of any decision to cease sponsorship of the PRCA and rodeo, so I may let family, friends and colleagues know AT&T does not support verified animal cruelty.

Sincerely,