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Dr Hasel:

I have many years of experience involving the care of chickens. By virtue of my training as a veterinarian and my experience, I am qualified to comment on the welfare and well-being of chickens. It is in this context that I provide my professional opinion on the event known as chicken 'roping'.

As you are aware, chickens instinctively fear being handled by humans. This is particularly true in the situation surrounding chicken 'roping' during which chickens are chased and captured using ropes (lariats or lassos). I viewed a video of this event (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p1IK4sLooM>) and observed the following treatment of the chickens:

1. purposeful shaking and poking of an individual (presumably to agitate them)
2. chasing and lassoing of individuals (especially around the neck)
3. lifting of individuals off the ground, the weight of their bodies supported only by their necks
4. pulling of individuals along the ground by their necks
5. stretching individuals between a lasso around the neck and one around the legs

I consider all the above to be inhumane for the chickens and cruel behaviour on the part of the people. Observations 2-5 represent extreme inhumanity and cruelty. Not only were the chickens frightened and struggling to get away, they were being put at risk of severe injury, particularly of the neck, possibly even resulting death. Some of the chickens lay flat on the ground after being lassoed and hoisted into the air and dropped, no longer struggling. I could not determine if this was due to injury or the tonic immobility seen in chickens who are highly stressed or distressed ([Hansen et al 1993](#); [Mills & Nicol 1990](#)).

Survivability is enhanced by being able to avoid notice by predators. One of the means by which this is accomplished is by not displaying signs of disability where possible ([Hansen et al 1993](#)), even while enduring situations known to cause substantial pain or distress. As a result, some chickens subjected to extreme conditions such as in this 'roping' event may not always show outward signs of being in distress. One cannot assume, however, that this means they are not enduring pain ([Gentle & Hill 1987](#)) or experiencing extreme fear as indicated by tonic immobility ([Hansen et al 1993](#); [Mills & Nicol 1990](#)).

The chickens being subjected to this extremely stressful and terrifying situation gain nothing from it. They are not enjoying themselves. Furthermore, when people derive enjoyment at such events, they do so by debasing their own character by seeking thrills through violent acts against unwilling, defenceless and weaker individuals such as the chickens. Of great importance is the implicit message sent by such abuse of non-human animals. By example, such events 'teach' people, particularly children, that it is acceptable to use and abuse animals for any human purpose, regardless how trivial and even when such use compromises the welfare and well-being of the animals involved.

Our society desperately needs to foster a greater respect for the other creatures with whom we *share* – not own – this planet. Chicken 'roping' is antithetical to that aspiration and should be anathema to a civilised society. I hope that, as a veterinary colleague, you will agree and use your authority to have this inhumane practice stopped.



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