



South Dakota Tobacco-Free Rodeo Guide

*“Take care of the children. Tobacco will kill you, and I am living proof of it.”
Wayne McLaren, former Marlboro Man*

Rodeos bring communities together to share civic pride and spend time with family. Rodeos also allow communities to express themselves and teach traditions to their children, while celebrating the athletes’ skills and abilities. Unfortunately, the great tradition of rodeo has been stained by the image of tobacco.

Whether your goal is to eliminate tobacco sponsorship, eliminate tobacco usage from the rodeo grounds, or both, this guide will help you. Cowboys, cowgirls and their horses may travel from city to city, but the traditions and memories of the rodeo stay in the community long after the competitions are over. Creating a tobacco-free rodeo helps to build healthy and positive traditions for generations to come.

The History of Rodeo

The first recorded rodeo in America took place in 1864, although it is believed that unrecorded rodeos have been in existence since the early 1700’s. Cowboys and ranchers competed to determine who was the fastest and strongest at some of the day-to-day challenges of life on the range. These competitions included riding and roping techniques on horses and cattle. By the 1890’s, cowboys began to travel the country and make a living in professional rodeo.

The first rodeo in South Dakota is thought to have taken place in Rosebud in the late 1890s. South Dakota is home to many rodeo greats like Casey Tibbs, Mattie Newcombe, Billy Etbauer, Chad Ferley, Paul Tierney, Jeff Willert and Lisa Lockhart. Rodeo continues to provide an exciting and thrilling tribute to ranch life from generations past.¹

There are numerous rodeos and western events that take place annually across the state, varying from PRCA to 4-H, little britches and high school-level events.

The Connection of Rodeo and Tobacco

Rodeo is almost 150 years old, but it wasn’t until the 1970’s that tobacco companies began to realize the benefit of promoting their brands to millions of rodeo fans. In 1972, R.J. Reynolds became the first tobacco company to sponsor rodeos.

The U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (USST) began contacts with rodeo associations in the mid-1980s. In 1974, USST fostered the spit tobacco and college rodeo connection by awarding scholarships to college rodeo athletes. The NIRA discontinued awarding the USST scholarships in 2007.

Know the Rodeo

It’s important to understand the terms, events and organizations related to the rodeo that take place in your town. Despite all of the information available about rodeos, perhaps the most valuable thing to understand is how the people in your community respond to the rodeo. An explanation of events can be found on the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) Rodeo 101 page: <http://prorodeo.com/prorodeo/rodeo/rodeo101>. Here is a list of associations to help you get started:

Rodeo Associations

- International Professional Rodeo Association: www.iprarodeo.com
- South Dakota High School Rodeo Association: www.sdhsra.com
- South Dakota Rodeo Association: www.sdrodeo.com

- National High School Rodeo Association: www.nhsra.org
- National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association: www.collegerodeo.com
- National Professional Rodeo Association: www.npra.com
- Professional Bull Riders: www.pbrnow.com
- Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association: <http://prorodeo.org>
- United Rodeo Association: www.unitedrodeoassociation.com
- United States Team Roping Championships: www.ustrc.com
- Women's Professional Rodeo Association: www.wpra.com
- National Little Britches Association: www.nlbra.com
- South Dakota 4-H Rodeo: sd4hrodeo.org
- Northwest Ranch Cowboy Association: www.ncrarodeo.com
- United Barrel Racing Association: www.ubra.org/south-dakota
- Northwest Barrel Racing Association: www.nwbra.com
- South Dakota Barrel Racing Association: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/140973516607/>
- South Dakota Cutting Horse Association: www.sdchacutters.com.istemp.com
- Mid-States Rodeo Association: www.m-sra.com
- Wrangler Team Roping Championship: www.wranglertrc.com
- National Rodeo Cowboys Association: www.nrcarodeo.com

Nationwide Trends

Rodeos around the country are regulating tobacco at their events. Here are some well-known rodeos and their policies.

- **Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA):** In 2009, the PRCA ended their national sponsorship contract with the U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company.
- **Casper Baca Rodeo Company, New Mexico:** In 2008, Casper Baca became the first New Mexico rodeo promoter to ban advertising, sponsorships and the distribution of free spit tobacco samples at all of his rodeo events. Baca aims to make the rodeo a healthier place for children and families.
- **The Pendleton Round Up, Oregon:** In 2005, Pendleton passed an ordinance prohibiting tobacco sampling in public places or at public events, including the PRCA Pendleton RoundUp Rodeo (one of the nation's oldest rodeos). Phillip Houk, Pendleton mayor, commented, "Our primary goal was to keep it out of the hands of young people."
- **South Dakota State University:** In 2005, the rodeo team ended their contract with a tobacco company even though it meant giving up thousands of dollars in scholarship money. The team was able to partner with the American Cancer Society and the South Dakota Tobacco-Free Kids Network to replace the sponsorship money. Terry McCutcheon, the team's coach, said that now kids "can look at a cowboy and see that they don't have to chew or they don't have to smoke...you can still be a cowboy and still be an athlete and not have to have that as part of your character."

Why Tobacco-Free Rodeos?

Tobacco-free rodeos are important for the health and safety of everyone involved.

- The rodeo is a place for parents, city leaders and rodeo participants to model healthy behavior for children.
- Tobacco product waste is often littered on the ground and poses serious health risks to toddlers and livestock due to ingestion.
- Secondhand smoke is dangerous to all rodeo spectators, participants and livestock, even in outdoor venues.

It's about Healthy Families, not Hazardous Products

Attend any rodeo or watch bull riding on television and you'll see children with their families enjoying the tradition together. Many rodeos include events designed to entertain the smallest cow-pokes in the audience. Events like mutton busting and the flag race showcase young cowboys and cowgirls. There are also events at intermissions that are meant to catch the attention of a younger crowd. Intermissions can include rodeo clowns and kids games

like a calf scramble. Tobacco-free rodeos protect families from inhaling secondhand smoke and being exposed to spit tobacco use in bleachers, grandstands and other seating areas. Eliminating tobacco sponsorship at rodeos prevents youth from associating the rodeo with tobacco.

It's about Communities, not Corporations

Like many other community events, the rodeo is a place for people to come together. People come to reconnect with old friends, cheer on participants from the community and browse local vendors. The community supports the rodeo and the rodeo would not survive without the community. ***Tobacco companies usually have no ties to a community beyond the need to sell tobacco products***, and should not be allowed to soil the community's rodeo tradition simply to promote tobacco products.

It's about Sport, not Spit

It's been said that rough-stock rodeo events are the toughest eight seconds in sports. Cowboys and cowgirls are strong athletes; they control thousand-pound animals with skill and grace. Tobacco usage can severely harm an athlete's ability to perform and will degenerate their overall health. Rodeo athletes are also role models for the younger generation, and spit tobacco use does not promote healthy behavior for the children in the audience. We need rodeos to provide a good example for our youth that sports and tobacco don't mix. We wouldn't want tobacco to be such a large part of other professional sports, so why should we continue to accept tobacco in the sport of rodeo?

Who Will Support our Message?

Gathering community support for a tobacco-free rodeo will help you present your policy request to the rodeo committee. Some supporters may directly participate in the rodeo and others may be fans of the rodeo. Try contacting these potential supporters in your community:

- Rodeo Athletes like cowboys/cowgirls (be sure they do not receive tobacco sponsorship money)
- Local groups and businesses that may participate in or sponsor the rodeo when the tobacco connections are gone
- Rodeo fans and supporters
- Youth Groups (i.e. 4-H, SDHSRA, Little Britches)
- Family and youth-serving organizations
- Faith groups
- Doctors, dentists and other health professionals

Find the Tobacco Influence

Tobacco company names and products can be seen in many areas of rodeos. When requesting the elimination of sponsorship, be sure to think about these areas:

- Event program ads and posters
- Signage (banners, scoreboards, etc.)
- Sampling/promotional booths
- Prize/purse/scholarship money
- Logos worn by participants
- Title sponsorship
- Local advertising in newspapers
- Tobacco company tents, booths, semi-trailers (these areas usually offer giveaways, coupons or other items)
- On-site concessions that sell food and tobacco products

Creating Tobacco-Free Rodeos

To create a tobacco-free rodeo you must assess the community, build support for your policy, and assist with policy adoption.

1. **Research the Rodeo:** Learn who makes the decisions about the rodeo (it's usually a board made up of community members), who sponsors the rodeo and who owns the rodeo grounds. Research how often the rodeo board meets and how to get on a meeting agenda. Find out if there are any deadlines or requirements for sponsorship (sponsors may be confirmed months before the rodeo).
2. **Assess Support:** Find out how the community feels about a tobacco-free rodeo. You can conduct a survey to gauge the level of support for your policy request. Use your survey results when planning your presentation to the rodeo board.
3. **Develop a Sample Policy:** Decide if you want a policy to eliminate tobacco sponsorship, tobacco use or both. A comprehensive policy request will help ensure that the decision makers are considering a strong policy. Include rationale for the request, facilities/areas you would like included and recommendations for enforcement. See the following link for model policy examples:
http://www.tobaccofreeparks.org/documents/Model_Rodeo_Policies.pdf
4. **Build Policy Support:** Begin contacting potential supporters (see "Who Will Support our Message?" for ideas). Gather letters of support, petition signatures and other proof of support. Find community organizations that are able to replace tobacco sponsorship dollars with their own money.
5. **Find a Champion:** While building support in the community, begin to build relationships and support with rodeo board members. If you or other supporters know a board member, begin by conducting an informal interview with him/her about your policy request. Try to hold informal and educational meetings with as many board members as you can to explain why a tobacco-free rodeo is important. Also look for champions among respected local rodeo athletes that may have had tobacco-related health issues, or have otherwise quit using tobacco.
6. **Get on the Agenda:** Contact the board and indicate your interest in making a formal request for a tobacco-free rodeo policy at their upcoming meeting. Determine when and where meetings are held and how much time you will have to give your presentation. Ask about deadlines to give materials to board members.
7. **Plan your Presentation:** Determine who is going to speak on behalf of your group and what they are going to say. Short testimonials from youth, parents and other supportive organizations will help demonstrate the need for a tobacco-free rodeo. Invite other supporters to attend the meeting to show their support.
8. **Make your Presentation and Assist with Policy Development:** Present the information that your group planned in step 7. Be ready to respond to questions that the board might have. After your presentation, provide the board with any additional information that they need to make a decision. Attend any remaining meetings.
9. **Assist with Policy Implementation and Promote the Message:** Show your appreciation for the board's support by publicly recognizing their efforts. Assist with signage and notification. Promote the policy to the community so they know they have a tobacco-free rodeo to look forward to!
10. **If the Board is Not Ready to Pass a Comprehensive Policy:** Propose that the rodeo designate special events like "Family Day" or "Kids Day" as days that are free of tobacco use and sponsorship.

Questions to Ask Policy Makers

- What do tobacco companies want with our community? We may get a scoreboard, but the tobacco company gets access to our youth.
- Would we allow this type of sponsorship at other sporting events?
- Doesn't our community deserve a healthy and safe rodeo?
- What kind of role modeling do our kids see if we allow tobacco use and sponsorship?
- Do you know how much tobacco companies spend in South Dakota to market to potential replacement customers (our youth)?
- Secondhand smoke can deter people from attending an event (particularly families, the elderly and anyone with asthma or respiratory problems). Shouldn't the entire community be able to enjoy the rodeo?

Media and Resource Guidelines

Existing Media:

- [South Dakota Community Toolkit](#)
- [BeFreeSD Media Download Library](#)
- [CDC's Media Campaign Resource Center](#)
- 3'x5' banner (pictured right)
available upon request



Requests for New Media:

- Special requests for additional media should be limited and must be discussed and approved with your regional Tobacco Prevention Coordinator (TPC) prior to purchasing any advertising space for rodeos. Local TPCs will send the request to the Communication Coordinator for additional clarification and approval.
- Special requests for additional media will only be considered when existing media cannot fulfill the request.
- Please start the process for any special media requests at least two months prior to the deadline. Set-up, designing and printing all require a significant amount of time.
- Any design or layout work, logo tagging, printing or set-up to create special requests will be provided by the SD Tobacco Control Program's contracted media agency. Coalitions will be invoiced for these services per an agreed upon amount.
- Please contact your [TPC](#) or [Katie Hill](#), Communications Coordinator, for additional questions or information.

ⁱ <https://www.travelsouthdakota.com/before-you-go/about-south-dakota/rodeo/past-and-present>