



REGIONAL TOBACCO-FREE RODEO PROJECT

November 27, 2007

Mr. Keith Martin
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association
101 Pro Rodeo Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Dear Mr. Martin:

As supporters of rodeo, the Buck Tobacco Sponsorship Project and the Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project (Buck Tobacco/RTFRP) are very pleased and proud that the sport is growing so much in popularity. But we believe that kids and families in rodeo audiences should see that being a cowboy means being tough and healthy, not using tobacco. We are writing this open letter to strongly urge you not to continue the PRCA's contract with the US Smokeless Tobacco Company (USSTC).

Tobacco doesn't belong in any sport, including rodeos. Spit tobacco causes deadly, disfiguring oral cancers and increases the risk of heart disease. Unfortunately, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one in ten teenage boys uses spit tobacco.

Large rodeo scoreboards, banners, and program ads sponsored by USSTC send a confusing message to young audience members. Sampling booths may be off-limits to children under 18, but kids see adults going in to get free samples, which gives them the message that chewing tobacco is part of being an adult rodeo fan or cowboy. Asking parents to counteract that message is like telling kids in a polluted environment not to breathe the air.

Buck Tobacco and the RTFRP applaud the PRCA's participation in programs such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Eat Smart. Play Hard." project, in which PRCA cowboys and rodeo queens visit schools to talk about the importance of healthy lifestyles, and the "Tough Enough to Wear Pink" campaign to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer research during rodeo events. In order to be a truly consistent supporter of healthy lifestyles and efforts to reduce cancer rates, the PRCA should end its relationship with USSTC.

We are pleased to see more family-friendly sponsors like Pace Picante, AT&T, and Wrangler supporting rodeo events. Given these companies' interest in sponsoring rodeo and the troubling influence that tobacco has on young rodeo audiences, we urge you to discontinue the PRCA's sponsorship contract with USSTC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea Dodge".

Andrea Craig Dodge
Project Director

cc: Advocates supporting rodeos without tobacco

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Buck Tobacco Sponsorship is a project of the Tobacco-Free Events Project, Public Health Trust, Public Health Institute.