Introduction

Caving pain and distress in animals is an ethically serious matter, particularly when it is done in the name of entertainment. This study provides a method for identifying and quantifying the distress experienced by bulls during bullfights, utilizing established observational methodologies for evaluating distress in boxes and other animals.

This report applies a distress scale, which includes evaluations of behaviors that are indicative of pain, to review activities which are of concern from an animal welfare standpoint. These behaviors include behaviors identified as indicators of distress, suggesting that the behaviors they exhibit as a result resemble those fighting bulls experience — they suffer in the bull ring. Initial Conclusions

The behaviors they exhibit as a result resemble those fighting bulls experience — they suffer in the bull ring.

Materials and Methods

Behavioral observations using the “Bullfighting Distress Scale” from Table 1 were used to quantitatively evaluate the distress the bulls experienced in the bullfighting arena.

Video Locations and Dates:

Guadalajara, Spain: September 19, 2010

Logrono, Spain: September 21 and 22, 2010

Seville, Spain: September 24 and 25, 2010

San Fernando, Spain: September 28, 2010

Arnedo, Spain: September 29, 2010

Madrid, Spain: September 30 and October 1, 2010

Bullfighting Distress Scale

A variable rating scale was developed to assess distress exhibited by bulls during a bullfight. The categories that were considered for the rating scale, chosen as indicators of distress supported by scientific literature, were:

- Vocalization
- Body posture
- Defecations
- Breathing
- Physical signs of injury
- Gait

Vocalization was not included in the distress scale because the crowd noise and background music during the bullfight made it too difficult to consistently hear the bulls. Defecations were also not included because bulls used for bullfighting are usually fed only straw, or nothing at all, once they leave the ranch for the bullring. This prevents the bulls from defecating and soiling the sand in the arena with feces.

The specific descriptors were selected as behavioral indicators demonstrated by bulls in the bullfighting arena for the participation in the study. Based on the frequencies of behaviors exhibiting distress, a numerical score was given each descriptor portraying the progressive characteristics of distress within each category.

Initial Statistical Analysis

Below are the initial statistics that have been gathered for the study. Further observations are still being collected in order to assert both validity and reliability of the data. Furthermore, not all signs of distress have been documented, as the camera was not always on the bull. Therefore, the frequency and duration of observed distress in each video is likely underestimated.

Initial Conclusions

The frequency with which bulls during bullfights exhibit behaviors identified as indicators of distress, suggest that fighting bulls experience distress — they suffer in the bull ring.

The behaviors they exhibit as a result resemble those demonstrated by other distressed bovines. This raises serious ethical concerns about whether bullfighting can be justified, particularly given that the activity is conducted solely to provide a spectacle for the purposes of entertainment.

The manner and length in which the animals suffer in bullfighting (both the bulls and the horses) cannot be deemed a spectacle for the purposes of entertainment.