

PUBLISHING

Abbotsford newspaper accused of refusing to run anti-rodeo ad

Vancouver Humane Society calls rejection a 'denial of free speech'

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VANCOUVER SUN

An Abbotsford newspaper is being accused of hindering free expression for thumbing its nose at a \$2,500 full-page, colour ad that questioned the treatment of animals at the upcoming Abbotsford Agrifair and Rodeo.

The Vancouver Humane Society maintains the Abbotsford News — listed on the Agrifair website as a partner of the Rodeo and Agrifair — rejected the ad despite the fact that it wasn't offensive, but merely raised a different point of view about the fair, from July 31 to Aug. 3.

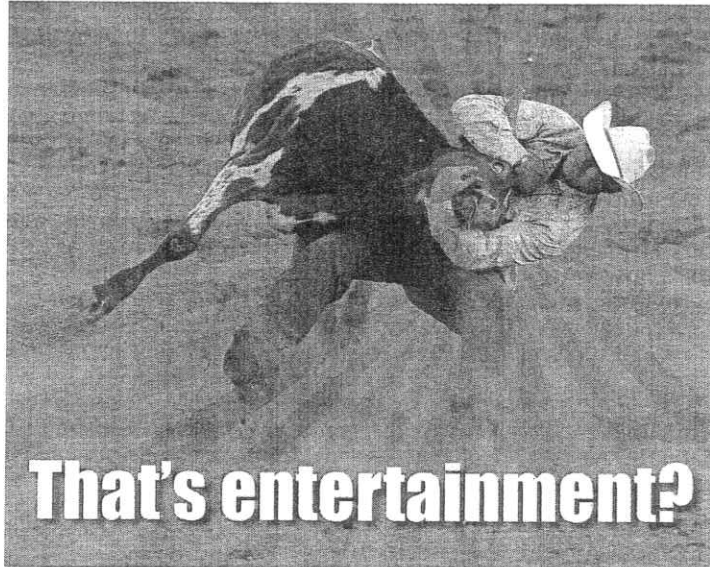
"We think it's a denial of free speech," said Peter Fricker, the humane society's projects and communications director.

"We understand the Abbotsford News is a business, but most newspapers support the concept of free expression and the right to dissent. As far as our lawyers are concerned, there's no legal problems with it. There's nothing defamatory. And it's not offensive, other than the fact that it shows what happens to animals in rodeos.

"It's pretty straightforward and the photograph was taken at a previous Abbotsford rodeo of the steer-wrestling event," added Fricker.

Fricker said he was informed by the newspaper on June 19 that the ad wouldn't run, and that he then contacted an advertising sales representative with Black Press, which owns the newspaper, asking if they'd consider an amendment to the ad.

"She said she'd pass it on to the publisher but we didn't hear anything back, so on June 25 we emailed again and she (the sales rep) responded that they wouldn't accept the ad, even if amended.



That's entertainment?

Every year at the Agrifair rodeo in Abbotsford, animals are subjected to fear, pain and stress for the sake of human amusement. Who could support such blatant animal cruelty? If you care about animals please don't go to the rodeo. If you want to help end animal suffering in Abbotsford please tell the Agrifair to stop cruel rodeo events and ensure the fair is family-friendly and free of violence toward animals.

Stop rodeo cruelty at the Abbotsford Agrifair

VHS

more information at:

www.vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca

The Abbotsford News, a partner in the Agrifair and Rodeo, refused to run this full-page colour ad, says the Vancouver Humane Society.

"It was a flat refusal. They didn't give any reason."

The Vancouver Sun was unable to reach anyone at the Abbotsford News for comment Thursday.

Fricker said the society won't pursue the matter legally. "They're a business and they have the right to make a decision. We've also booked ads at two radio stations in the valley on the rodeo and they agreed to take them."

The humane society has had

some problems placing ads in the past: once in 2008, when the Calgary Herald and Calgary Sun refused to run an ad calling for a ban on the calf-roping event at the Calgary Stampede; and again in 2008 when it was forced to move an ad — asking if Jesus would have condoned brutality against rodeo animals — to a less conspicuous page in the now-defunct Abbotsford Times, Fricker said.

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