

Bull-fighting in Western Kenya: A Case Study of a Persistent Practice Despite Existing Legislation on Animal Welfare.

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Introduction

- Bullfighting (*tauromachia / tauromachy*) - locking of horns between bulls
- Perceived as an act of spectacular entertainment by western Kenya *Luhya* communities
- Thought to promote community cohesion / social interaction
- Practice marred by distress to and suffering of bulls
- Practice has persisted against existing laws*

**The prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Chapter 360 of the Laws of Kenya*

Objectives of study

- Part of a larger study. Specific study objectives were to establish:
 - i. The motivation for persistence of the culture of bullfighting
 - ii. Animal welfare concerns associated with fighting bulls
 - iii. The level of awareness of animal anti-cruelty laws and regulations, among the key stakeholders

Study Methodology

- A cross-sectional study conducted in Kakamega South Sub-County, Kakamega County-Kenya
- Target groups:
 - Owners of bulls involved in bullfighting ,
 - local leadership,
 - key opinion leaders
- Study sites: 4 locations of sub-County – Idakho E, W, C, S.
- One key informant in each location helped identify the target study population
- 40 respondents recruited into study

Methodology....

- Data relevant to study collected using:
 - a structured questionnaire,
 - key informant interviews,
 - observational assessments,
 - photography.



Results (1)

The motivation for persistence of practice

- Practice deep rooted in traditions and culture – *part of the history of the Luhya culture.*
- Pride in identifying with and pressure to carry on with a great family tradition (*inherited in 94.7%*)
- Associated with gaining fame in the village
- Source of livelihood for some (winning bulls / bull sales)
- Encouragement from politicians

Results (2)

Animal Welfare concerns

- Feeding bulls on traditional herbs to lower their libido and enhance bravery
- Bulls live in isolation
- Horns sharpened to enhance fighting (*jugular punctures*)
- Injuries in bulls (84%) / fighting while nursing injuries especially when prize is very attractive - *distress*
- Limited access to / delayed procurement (50%) of animal healthcare services
- Deaths from fights (12.5%) – excessive haemorrhage (50%)
- Distress in fighting bulls - locomotion, gait, behaviour etc.
- Human casualties not uncommon

Results (3)

Awareness of the law and regulations

- 62.5% are aware of the laws against bullfighting
- Despite being aware, many (97.4%) vowed to continue with the practice
- 68.4% - nothing can happen – it is their tradition
- Practice proponents have never seen anyone penalized for disobeying existing law (10.5%)
- Prominent local politicians will provide protection (7.9%) – are diehard supporters of practice

Results (3)

- 80% of knowledge on law from friends
- Animal welfare personnel, social media and livestock officers not doing much in creating awareness of the law against cruelty to animals in the area.

Animal with injured horn and eye after fight



Discussion

- The practice of bullfighting denies these animals their basic freedoms, especially:
 - *freedom from pain, injury and disease*
 - *freedom to express normal behaviour*
 - *freedom from fear and distress*
- Motivation for persistence of practice rooted in tradition, pride and fame and little economic gain
- Practice in vogue and much appreciated by many
- Alternative sources of livelihood possible

Conclusion

- Bulls suffer mental suffering, physical injuries and even death during bullfights
- Access to health services following injuries is a challenge in the study area
- Despite knowledge of the law, proponents ignore and break the law with impunity – *they know there will be no consequences*
- *Awareness not the problem but ATTITUDE is.*
- Bullfighting is an outdated and cruel practice which has outlived its time

Recommendations

- Bull owners need to be educated on animal welfare
- Legal action be taken against all perpetrators of this harmful practice
- Need for structured approach to increased awareness creation on existing anti-cruelty laws
- Existing laws on prevention of cruelty to animals should be implementation and better monitored.

T h a n k Y o u