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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **San Diego Humane Society Concludes Investigation After Pregnant Horse Dies at Petco Park Rodeo**

**San Diego, CA** — San Diego Humane Society's Humane Law Enforcement team has concluded its investigation into the tragic death of a pregnant horse at the rodeo held at Petco Park on January 11, 2025.

The mare participated in the saddle bronc competition that evening and showed no visible signs of injury during the event. However, approximately 15 minutes after competing, she began shaking, prompting an immediate call for veterinary assistance. San Diego Humane Society's Humane Officers and on-site veterinarians responded within minutes, but tragically, the horse collapsed and died before treatment could be provided.

A necropsy later determined that the horse was in her third trimester of pregnancy and that the cause of death was a ruptured uterine artery — a condition that can be fatal and may occur spontaneously.

### **Investigation Findings:**

San Diego Humane Society's Humane Law Enforcement team launched an immediate investigation into the cause of death and whether criminal negligence played a role. As part of the investigation, Humane Officers worked with forensic and laboratory veterinarians to conduct a necropsy and visited the owner's ranch to gather further information.

Animal cruelty in California does not need to be intentional or malicious to bring criminal charges. Under Penal Code §597, animal cruelty can be charged if someone intentionally, knowingly, or through criminal negligence causes harm to an animal. In the context of animal cruelty under California law, criminal negligence refers to behavior that is reckless, grossly careless, or demonstrates a disregard for the wellbeing of an animal. It goes beyond ordinary negligence (simple carelessness) and involves a failure to act with reasonable care in a way that any reasonable person would recognize as likely to cause harm. In contrast, accidental harm generally does not rise to the level of criminal negligence.

After conducting multiple interviews, collecting witness statements and expert opinions, it was determined that no laws were violated and there is no probable cause for criminal charges against horse owner, or the San Diego rodeo organizers. San Diego Humane Society's Humane Law Enforcement cannot prove definitively whether the horse's participation in the rodeo directly contributed to her death or that anyone had knowledge that she was more pregnant than the assumed eight months based on the horse owner's breeding schedule. The horse appeared very well maintained and provided for and her death appears to have been accidental and unforeseen.

### **Advocating for Stronger Protections:**

San Diego Humane Society remains firmly opposed to rodeos due to the inherent risks they pose and the fear, anxiety and stress they cause to animals. This tragic incident, combined with the serious injury of another horse after last year's rodeo, underscores the dangers of these events.

While rodeos remain legal, legality does not equate to humane treatment. The City of San Diego has now hosted two rodeos, and both resulted in animal injuries or death. San Diego Humane Society is calling on city leaders and event organizers, including the San Diego Padres, to prohibit rodeos from being held at Petco Park or within city limits.



San Diego Humane Society enforces animal welfare laws but does not create them. The organization advocates for stronger protections and ensuring no animal suffers for the sake of entertainment. For more information on its efforts to ban rodeos in San Diego, please visit [sdhumane.org/rodeo](https://sdhumane.org/rodeo).

**About San Diego Humane Society**

San Diego Humane Society's scope of social responsibility goes beyond adopting animals. We offer programs that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty and neglect, provide medical care, educate the community and serve as a safety net for all pet families. Serving San Diego County since 1880, San Diego Humane Society has campuses in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego. For more information, visit [sdhumane.org](https://sdhumane.org).

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