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NEWS RELEASE

Expert education highlights Stampede's 4-H Rodeo

CALGARY – For many of these youngsters, this is new territory. And this weekend, down on Stampede Park, it'll be the kind of territory where West meets East.

The 13th annual edition of the Calgary Stampede's Invitational 4-H Rodeo, sponsored by Westcan Bulk Transport and Lammle's Western Wear and Tack, takes over the Big Top on Saturday, Sept. 17 and Sunday, Sept. 18. In all, about 100 youngsters aged 9 through 20, representing 30 4-H clubs across the province, will saddle up — with many of them making their first foray into the rodeo ring.

As always, education is a major component of the Stampede's 4-H Rodeo, with numerous seminars and clinics scheduled for both mornings. And this year, there'll be some intriguing Eastern enlightenment as part of the tutoring sessions. Strathmore's Becky Stone, a certified yoga instructor who has an extensive rodeo background, will be presenting — for the first time in a rodeo setting — a seminar entitled *The Importance of Breath: How to Prepare Mind and Body for Competition*.

"The breath acts as the link between the mind and the body. When you become aware of your breath, you become aware of the state of your mind and your body," says Stone. "In a competitive arena, it's easy to get wrapped up inside your head, and not be aware that what's going on in your head is being displayed in your body, in one way or another.

"Horses are incredibly intuitive animals. They pick up on your emotions — nerves, fear, anger, excitement, calmness, focus, confidence — and respond, depending on how you are handling the situation," adds Stone. "If you control your breath, you'll control your mind and your body. If we can teach these youngsters to recognize the importance of these links, they'll succeed better — not only in competition, but in their relationship with their horse, themselves, and the people around them."

Numerous rodeo careers have been hatched at the Stampede's 4-H Rodeo, with some young enthusiasts moving on to Wrangler (junior high), high school, college, amateur, and even pro rodeo. With that in mind, organizers focus on starting the journey off right with advice from undisputed rodeo experts . . . as well as staging an enjoyable experience for those just looking for some weekend fun.

Also on Saturday, Sept. 17, Dr. Tom Picherak of the Carstairs Veterinary Clinic will teach the importance of equine dentistry. Master bit maker Dave Elliott of Fort Macleod, Alta., will talk about the proper use of bits and spurs, and professional trick rider Niki Cammaert-Flundra, originally of Rockyford, Alta., and her students will be giving trick riding and liberty horse demonstrations.

On Sunday, Sept. 18, former Canadian rodeo star Dave Shields of Okotoks, Alta., a recent recipient of the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame's Legendary Achievement Award, will be putting on a roughstock clinic. Lorne Lausen of Strathmore will head up a calf-roping seminar, while Lindsay Miller of Dalemead, Alta., a competitor in the Canadian All Girl Rodeo Association, will present a goat-tying clinic.

Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Limited

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"This is a way for the kids to get an introduction to rodeo with supervision. That's why the clinics are so important for us," says John Finn, a member of the Stampede's 4-H Rodeo committee.

"Education is a big part of this event. We want to make sure these get a proper understanding, a proper grounding, so they can enjoy the sport safely," adds Finn. "We bring in pro cowboys and cowgirls who can give them some inside tips. A lot of times, that sort of instruction isn't available at the club level.

"This event has also been a driving force in getting 4-H to promote rodeo in the province. When we started, we were just drawing kids from the Calgary area. Now we draw right from Coutts (at the Montana border) all the way up to north of Grande Prairie. The word has spread about our rodeo."

While the mornings are devoted to education, the Stampede's 4-H Rodeo participants will get their noses dirty in the afternoons. Young cowboys and cowgirls will test their chops with timed events (barrel racing, pole bending, and thread-the-needle) on Saturday and roughstock events (breakaway roping, goat tying, cow riding, and steer daubing) on Sunday.

Steer daubing, for the intermediate (12 to 14) and senior (15 to 20) age categories, is a new event at the 4-H Rodeo, prepping participants for the rigors of steer wrestling down the road. "You don't have to practice for years to do this," says Shields, who also chairs the Stampede's 4-H Rodeo committee. "But it is good training for steer wrestling. They need a hazer, they have to be able to read the animal, and they need to get close enough to put a paint spot on its back."

Stone, who participated in 4-H and high school rodeo, will also be discussing yoga and its importance in musculoskeletal health and core strength. She says she's generally found a receptive attitude among Westerners to her Eastern teachings.

"The principles that horses teach us are actually the principles of feminine leadership . . . intuition, understanding, and gentleness," says Stone. "I'm finding that in this day and age, there's a real shift in society that's beginning to shun leadership by force.

"Yoga is so approachable. It's got a global perspective. It's about gaining greater understanding, and everybody is looking for greater understanding."

Afternoon competition gets underway under the Big Top on Saturday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at 1:30 p.m.

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