

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times In the past, local horse enthusiasts have inquired Seward County commissioners about the use of the rodeo arena at the county fairgrounds for personal use. Before Monday, no action had been taken on the issue. Commissioner C.J. Wettstein put the information out for the board to discuss and vote on in the form of a motion.

Prior to making the motion, Wettstein talked about the inquiries that had been made about using the arena.

“I’ve had a lot of people who keep saying that they’d like to be able to just go out and ride their horse in the arena,” he said. “They could just go out work their horse, ride it, different things. We’ve talked about this so many times. We never get anything done.”

As part of the motion, county officials would need to put up at least one sign at the rodeo arena informing horse riders of the county’s responsibilities for injuries. Wettstein explained what would be posted on the sign. “Under Kansas law, there is no liability for injury to or the death of a participant in domestic animal activities resulting from the inherent risk of domestic animal activities,” he said. “You are assuming the risk of participating in this domestic animal activity.”

Wettstein said this simply means if someone is doing something with animals in the rodeo arena and injuries occur, the liability does not fall on the county. “I’m willing to give it a shot, put this up, and have them release a liability form and give it a shot and let people utilize that arena during daytime hours free of charge,” he said.

The Seward County Activity Center director will administer the use of the rodeo arena under the new rules.

“They’d have to go to the office, and ask them to give them a release,” Wettstein said.

The commissioner’s motion allows individuals and the public to utilize the rodeo arena grounds at no cost as long as they meet the following criteria:

- There will be no charge for the event and no prizes given out;
- It will be a daytime usage, and no electricity will be used for the event; and
- People using the arena will sign a release of liability for Seward County.

The motion also stated the county will do the following:

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- Put up signs, as many as are necessary, from the Kansas Horse Council, which are signs under K.S.A. 60-4001 through 60-4004;
- If the arena needs to be worked up for the event, county maintenance personnel will work the arena up for a charge not to exceed \$50; and
- There will be no charge for any 4-H sponsored event, and people can use it whenever they want to, as long as it abides by the light and noise law.

Commissioner Jim Rice seconded the motion, and the board voted 4-0, with chairman Ada Linenbroker absent, to approve the motion.

The form releases and consent forms for rodeo arena use will be subject to approval by county counsel Dan Diepenbrock.