

Hamilton arena ropes in giant rodeo spectacle

An international rodeo expected to be viewed by millions is heading to Hamilton's Claudelands Arena later this year, **Aaron Leaman** reports.

The white-knuckle thrill of the rodeo is coming to Hamilton's Claudelands Arena as the city plays host to an event with a television audience touted to be in the millions.

Organisers of the International Rodeo have confirmed the event is moving to Hamilton this year after four sellout seasons at CBS Canterbury Arena in Christchurch.

The event, scheduled for November 19, will showcase 32 bull and bronco riders from North and South America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Described as the "toughest sport of dirt", the International Rodeo has previously attracted some of the sport's top competitors.

The event will also feature a performance by Kiwi band Dragon.

Securing the event - billed as one of the world's largest indoor rodeo productions - will be seen as another major coup for the Claudelands Arena.

It attracted more than 3000 people earlier this month when it played host to music event EDGETravaganza and received widespread praise from performers, spectators and production experts.

That lineup included some of New Zealand's top artists, including Stan Walker, Midnight Youth and Kids of 88.

Industry experts earlier told the *Waikato Times* the arena's excellent acoustics and layout would attract high-profile events to Hamilton.

Marketing material for the event stresses rodeo is not just for the blokes, with almost 85 per cent of tickets bought by females, although 55 per cent of spectators are men.

Previous international rodeos have attracted almost 250,000 New Zealand television viewers and event organisers Force Majeure Events International claimed almost 300 million people worldwide watched highlights packages from the event on television.

This year's event will include bareback and saddle bronco riding, bull riding, pick-up riders and crowd favourites - rodeo clowns.

It is estimated 80 per cent of the event's audience will travel from outside Hamilton.



Ride 'em cowboy: Australian bronco rider Peter Moffat takes to the saddle at the CBS Canterbury Arena in Christchurch for the International Rodeo, to be hosted later this year in Hamilton. Photo: FAIRFAX

1080 activist lands punches on chairman

lan Stewart

An anti-1080 protester punched the 65-year-old chairman of the Waikato Conservation Board to the ground outside a community meeting in Tairua on Sunday.

Arthur Hinds was at the meeting to speak to his proposal to create a marine reserve off the Coromandel when he was confronted by a group of angry protesters.

Mr Hinds said he had used the predator-controlling poison 1080 on his farm in the past and protesters marked him as a target. "I heard someone call out 'There's your man'. As I turned, he hit me."

Mr Hinds said a man in his late 50s punched him from behind. "It flattened me. He tried to have another go but I grabbed his arm."

Others intervened to stop the assault, which left Mr Hinds with a black eye and a swollen cheek.

Conservation Minister Kate Wilkinson yesterday condemned the "brutal" attack.

"1080 is an emotive issue for some people and they are entitled to their

views, but they have no right to physically attack members of the community who only wish to protect our bush and wildlife from predators.

"Anti-1080 activists on the Coromandel have a history of intimidating and threatening DOC staff. Arthur works hard to promote conservation issues in Waikato and I doubt the actions of a few cowards will deter him."

Mr Hinds said police had been informed as "you need idiots like that taken off the street".

He said he had used 1080 since 2006 and since then the kiwi population had risen to 98 and flocks of kereru - native wood pigeon - had grown to 50 or 60 birds on his land at Whenuakite. He attributed the success to predator control measures, including the use of 1080.

Ms Wilkinson promised support for Mr Hinds. "The individuals involved in this attack will be rightly dealt with by the police but the community also needs to stand up and send a strong message condemning this atrocious behaviour."

Mr Hinds said police were still investigating.



Kate Wilkinson: Condemned "brutal" attack.



Arthur Hinds: Punched in head from behind.

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