

Isabel G. García, Spain

1. From where are you?

I'm from Spain, but I'm currently living in Portugal, where bullfights exist too.

2. Are there bull fights in your country and if yes, how many of them in a year?

In 2015, in Spain were celebrated 1736 bullfighting-related events. In this number are not included private events, or not registered events from tiny villages, which also have permission to celebrate bullfights.

Of these 1736 registered events, around 23% were using calfs and other 20% using grown bulls, as you can see in the pic below (source: Education, Culture and Sports Ministry of Spain)

<http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/tauromaquia/estadisticas.html>

<http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/dms/mecd/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/estadisticas/cultura/principales-estadisticas/Estadistica de Asuntos Taurinos 2011-2015 Sintesis de Resultados.pdf>

Gráfico 4. Evolución de festejos taurinos celebrados

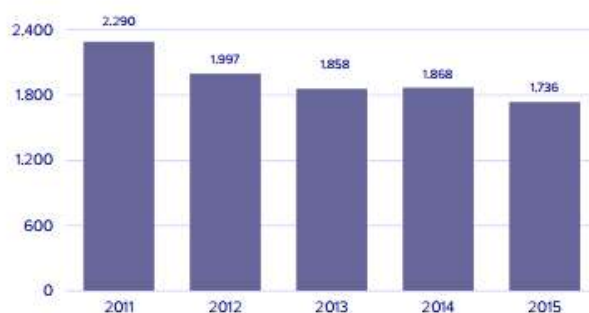


Gráfico 5. Festejos taurinos celebrados por tipo de festejo. 2015 (En porcentaje)



3. Why bullfights still exist?

Is difficult to answer this question, probably, there is not only one reason. Using animals for entertainment is as old as human race. In Spain in particular, I think is a combination of different factors, like:

- The power of old powerful and wealthy rancher families, which gained influence during or dictatorship (only finished in 1975). Fascist dictatorship was in Spain since 1939 till 1975, and in all these years, bullfights were encouraged as part of Spanish culture. This brainwashing made Spanish people to accept as a fact the association Spain+bullfights. The rancher families earned a lot of money in that period, and they have a huge influence still in the local and regional governments.
- The lack of culture and education of people, especially in rural and poor areas.
- The lack of empathy to animals. This is not only related with bulls, stray cats and dogs, farm animals, circus animal, animals cages in zoos, etc.. They all are seen as things, not sentient beings. Our economic and social system make easy for us to think in our surroundings as resources that we can use as we like, without thinking in others, or not think about it all, just live, consume and use as we want. Animals are the most damaged and hurt, as they are in the end of the line, without voice. In Spain there are a lot of folklore and popular festivities that involve some kind of animal abuse: throwing a goat from the top of a bell tower (Manganeses de la Polvorosa, Zamora); the same but with a turkey (Cazadilla, Seville); holding geese in a rope and making men throw down their necks so they decapitate the geese (Lekeitio, Basque Country), etc. This kind of horrors are present in all the Spanish geography, there is no one region worse than others. Bulls are black, big and powerful, and their suffering is not easy to see, so humans use these animals for entertainment arguing that they do not suffer.

4. Are bullfights popular?

In Spain bullfights are becoming more and more unpopular. Only in rural areas they are still supported and encouraged. In four years (as you can see in the previous graph), there were more than 500 bull-events less, even with public subsidies, which is huge. But there are a lot of other bull-events that are not being questioned by media or people, and are very cruel too.

5. Do people change in their behavior if they are watching or attending a bull fight?

It depends if the person watching is a supporter, a tourist, a child.. Supporters will enjoy the "spectacle" of the torture and killing, tourists, from my experience, they are usually shocked and in tears. Childs are afraid and, from my experience, do what their parents say.

If the person who watch a bullfight is someone that is just curious and want to see it for example in youtube, she/he will be probably shocked. What this person will see is a bull, all alone in a bullring with matadores, picadores.. men who are going to chase him with banderillas, and spears.. to stab those in bull's body on and on and one, till the bull is exhausted, with serious wounds, in agony. When this moment comes, then, a matador will stab a sword (estoque) in his back. The idea is to pierce bull's heart, but that rarely happens, so the bull falls, vomiting blood from his lungs. Hi is still alive when matadors cut his ears and his tail, and in some cases his testicles. To end his agony, they pierce a knife in bull's neck called "puntilla", which has to end bull's life, but again, that rarely happens, lefting him quadriplegic or something, and ready to be transported to the inside of the bullring, where he probably bleed to death, and he will be sent to the slaughterhouse.

6. Does the bull get something, to don't feel so much pain?

Nobody in a bullring cares about bull's pain. In fact, they argue that bulls are not sentient. Pain for them would mean more active bulls in the bullring, therefore more "fun", so in fact what they do is to give bulls things to make them suffer before the bullfight. They put pepper in bull's nose and anus, and Vaseline in his eyes, so he cannot see well the matadors. Bulls are left in a tiny cage in the bullring 24 hours before the bullfight, without water or food, and they are kept without sleeping. When bulls get out the cage, just to face his killers, the bull has been stabbed with a little spike with coloured ribbons called "estela", which has to hurt for sure.

7. How strong or weak is the protection of animals in your country and are there other big problems with animal rights?

Animal welfare laws in Spain are more or less ok, but the problem is that these laws are not being applied. Justice, police department, and other institutions are not really concerned about animal rights. They just don't care.

Fortunately, we have a political party (PACMA), and some NGOs and activists, dedicated to change this.

8. What I can do as a foreign person, to support you?

In my opinion, more important than money or deeds, is to spread the message, to help people know what happen, to make people react, and take active part in the fight. The more we are, the more powerful we become.

Donate to different organizations for sure would be helpful, sign and share petitions, etc., these things are great, but what we really need is more people concerned and committed with the fight against animal abuse.

9. What are important pages to inform myself in a profounder way?

A quick Google search will give you a lot of information, but I can recommend some:

- <http://www.latorturanoescultura.org/es/> to me one of the best platforms ever.
- PACMA <https://pacma.es/tauomaquia/>
- NGO CAS International, they have different languages, news and interesting links. <http://www.cas-international.org/EN/>

10. From where are these bulls exactly? From a special farm or...

Bulls for bullfights come from particular ranches that raise them, so they are a particular race. "Toro de lidia" is the race of the bulls destined to bullfights. "Toro de lidia" means exactly "bull for bullfight". Matadors and pro-bullfighting lobby are trying to convince people that "toros de lidia" are aggressive, which is not true, and that with the end of the bullfights the species will be lost forever, which is false too. They not even found the difference between race and species. The race only would be lost if no one is interested in keeping it, but as is happening with donkeys (not used for work anymore), becoming a protected animal of cultural interest, living in sanctuaries all over Spain, the same could be done with Toros de lidia. Which for sure will disappear without the end of bullfighting is taumachy and the way of living of these ranchers, and this is why they really are afraid of, they are in panic.

There are some famous rancher families, like Mihura, famous Spanish rancher in the past for given the most big, beautiful and aggressive bulls for bullfights. But, as you can see in the video of Fadjen, which is a Mihura bull, they are loving and calm, as the most of herbivores, that only attack in desperation for surviving.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69EAvSMsliM> (video in french with subtitles in english)

11. Have you ever been on a bull fight? And if yes, what have you noticed?

I have been in bull-events, and it was horrible. I can't even imagine what has to be to see an entire bullfight.

The word "bullfight" is a bad translation of the Spanish "corrida de toros", or "lidia". Bullfight suggests a kind of fight, but there is no fight, is just a cruel killing. The word in Spanish means something like "trick the bull", which describes better what really happens: a bull is tricked on and on making him believe that he has a chance to survive and go back home, but in the end, they laugh of that innocence, they will play with him, torture him, and in the end, they will kill him.

In Spain the bullfighting events are published everywhere (newspapers, posters...), in fact, the public TV broadcast the most important bullfights of the country.

12. Why do you think, that somebody wants to be a "Matador" (this man in the arena)?

I really have no idea, and I can't put myself in the shoes of a man that want to kill a bull for money and fun. Reading interviews and listening to matadors, they enjoy their "work" because the fame, the risk, and the power they feel when they are in the arena. Maybe there are other men and women that want to feel that too, and don't care about the bull.

Matadors usually say "we love the bull". The only explanation I can found for that affirmation, is that the bulls are the way they have to experience that excitation of the bullring. In the end, it just seems to be matador's big maniac empty egos.

Thank you very much Sadi ☺
Isabel G. Garcia (Spain)