UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES ”KING MIHAI I” FROM TIMISOARA
”YOUNG PEOPLE AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN APPLIED LIFE SCIENCES”

05-06 November 2026



THE EVOLVING PERCEPTION OF BULLFIGHTING

ORSOLYA KOMLOSI, KAROLY BODNAR
Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Szarvas, Hungary

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine how bullfighting is perceived across different social groups. The literature review serves as preparation for a larger-scale questionnaire-based survey (conducted in Spain and Hungary). Bullfighting is a traditional Iberian spectacle in which a matador faces a wild fighting bull—a breed specifically raised for this purpose—within an arena. These events are the subject of significant social debate; while some view them as a cultural tradition, animal welfare advocates and critics classify them as animal cruelty, and their popularity is steadily declining. At the same time, they serve as a tourist attraction and a source of revenue. The running of the bulls is more widely accepted, provided it does not culminate in the death of the animal.*

• Introduction

The authors possess personal experience with the Spanish and Portuguese forms of bullfighting and bull-running. They are not radical animal rights activists—they keep animals and consume meat—yet they are committed to the humane treatment of animals, as well as stress-free rearing and slaughter. This work serves as a foundation for an international survey regarding perceptions of bullfighting.

• Material and method

The authors reviewed the cultural traditions, tourism and economic impacts, the breeding of Lidia cattle, and the scientific articles on the animal welfare aspects of the topic to inform their own investigations.

• Results and discussions

Based on the literature reviewed, it is difficult to form a definitive opinion as to whether bullfighting is an outdated traditional spectacle or a brutal form of animal cruelty that should be condemned in the 21st century. Given the diversity of opinions, it can be concluded that:

- Bullfighting has a history spanning more than a thousand years on the Iberian Peninsula, and many hold fast to it as a deeply rooted cultural heritage.
- On the other hand, younger generations are beginning to distance themselves from events where animals are tortured and killed in public for the purpose of entertainment.
- The ritual of bullfighting, the arenas and their associated museums still generate significant tourist revenue for the countries that organize the events.
- This activity contributes to the maintenance and genetic preservation of the Lidia cattle breed and provides a livelihood for numerous farms.

HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES