

Colorado State Fair: something for everyone



Did you know the precursor to the current Colorado State Fair was first held in 1872, which was before Colorado was even recognized as a state?

On Oct. 9, 1872, the Southern Colorado and Industrial Association held the first show. Little did these event organizers know at the time that they had just started a tradition for the state of Colorado, a tradition that has now spanned 140 years and touched the lives of countless individuals.

In 1901, the Colorado State Fair moved to its current 80-acre site, in the southern Colorado city of Pueblo. In all these years, the state fair was only canceled once. During WWI in 1917, the annual fair was canceled to allow for the Army National Guard to use the fairgrounds for training purposes. In 1961, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association sanctioned rodeos began, and in 2010, state fair helped Colorado 4-H celebrate its 100-year anniversary.

The Colorado State Fair is now governed by a board of authority, which is made up of Commissioner of Agriculture John Salazar and 11 other citizens from across the state. Each year, the state fair features traditional events and attractions in addition to new activities for the whole family.

Some of the most popular events at the fair include: PRCA rodeos, concerts, parades, a carnival, monster trucks, a demo derby, tractor pulls, Fiesta Day and, of course, the livestock, horse and small animal shows and numerous 4-H and FFA displays.

Many local 4-H members have the opportunity to exhibit projects at state fair. For members who are interested in showing livestock, horses or small animals, 4-H members pre-enter their animals before state fair begins.

Extension Corner

Written by Kindra Plumb

These animal projects are not selected for state fair competition based on how well they do at the Phillips County Fair. Rather, 4-H members have the option of choosing which animals they would like to take on to state fair. Unlike the Phillips County Fair, where members simply consign their market projects to the Jr. Livestock Sale, state fair exhibitors must “make” the Colorado State Fair Jr. Livestock Sale, based on the animal’s placing in its respective market class.

Making the sale at state fair is quite the accomplishment, as only 36 beef, 50 hogs, 43 lambs, 22 goats, 2 rabbits and 2 poultry were sold at the 2011 Colorado State Fair Jr. Livestock Sale.

On the other hand, the general 4-H projects are selected to go to state fair based on their placing at the Phillips County Fair. Projects that receive unit champion and are deemed state fair quality by the judge are eligible for state fair competition.

The project and record book are then judged alongside other projects from across the state of Colorado. There are hundreds of 4-H projects on display, ranging from baked goods to heritage arts, leathercraft to entomology, visual arts to shooting sports and all projects in between. It’s quite the sight to walk into three large buildings and see them full of 4-H projects!

In addition to the shows and exhibits, state fair also provides the venue for numerous 4-H state contests. Some of these contests include: shooting sports, fashion revue, creative cooks, robotics, demonstration, cake decorating, dog trials and performing arts.

The Colorado State Fair has a rich history and offers a little something for all visitors to the fair. Whether you go for the livestock shows or to view 4-H projects or maybe take in a rodeo and concert, the state fair is definitely a destination to visit.

For more information on 4-H in Phillips County, contact the Phillips County Extension Office at 970-854-3616. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

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