

Mark your calendars for the weekend of September 23-24, the dates for this year's Anson Ag Expo & Fair. The event's planning committee has started meeting to prepare for the annual fall festivities.

The annual 4-H Youth Livestock Show will be held again this year at Circle G Arena on Friday and Saturday, and the Ag Fair will be held at the Extension Center in Wadesboro on Saturday.

The 4-H Youth Livestock Show will begin at 6:00 pm on Friday and again at 9:45 am on Saturday in Lilesville. The Ag Fair will be open to the public on Saturday from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm in Wadesboro.

Make plans to participate in this year's fair, by saving a jar of canned goods, or preparing a favorite house plant. In addition, a new category has been added this year for dried foods. There is something for everyone.

Be on the lookout for more information to come, including time schedules, fair book release, and much more. Come out and join the fun, and help us celebrate agriculture in Anson.

Anglers Can Help Keep Bass Alive this Summer by Following Simple Steps

Largemouth bass anglers who practice catch-and-release fishing this summer can follow a few simple steps to ensure the fish they catch today will survive to bite another lure.

Summertime heat brings with it higher temperatures and lower dissolved oxygen levels in reservoirs and rivers - conditions that are tough on largemouth bass, which can become more stressed when caught. To minimize stress on fish, an angler who plans to catch and release the fish should land the fish quickly and handle it as little as possible.

"Try not to remove the fish from the water, even when you're removing the hook from the fish's mouth," said Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division chief for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "Handle the fish as little as possible to help reduce the loss of slime coat, which is the fish's main defense against infection and disease."

Waters offers anglers other tips to keep a largemouth bass alive:

- Wet your hands before you touch a fish;
 - Return the fish quickly to the water if you do not plan to keep it or place it in a livewell;
 - Use a knotless nylon or rubber-coated net instead of a knotted nylon net.
- Anglers participating in fishing tournaments can minimize fish mortality by maintaining healthy oxygen and water quality in their livewells. A few ways to do this are:
- Knowing the capacity of the livewell and not exceeding a ratio of more than 1 pound of bass per gallon of water;
 - Running a recirculating pump continuously if more than 5 pounds of bass are in the livewell;
 - Using aerators or oxygen-injection systems to keep the water's oxygen level above 5 parts per million (ppm); and
 - Keeping livewell water about 5 degrees below the reservoir or river temperature by adding block ice.

Waters also recommends that tournament participants fill their weigh-in bags with livewell water, not reservoir or river water, before putting in their catch. They should put only five fish in a bag, fewer if the fish exceed 4 pounds each. Finally, they should limit the amount of time that fish are held in bags to less than 2 minutes.

Fishing tournament organizers can do their part to help keep fish alive by adopting best handling practices at all events. These include staggering weigh-in times to reduce the time fish are held in weigh-in bags, arranging for release boats to return bass quickly to the water and equipping recovery stations with oxygen and recirculating water. Organizers also can provide holding tanks during the weigh-in with water 5 degrees below the reservoir or river temperature and with oxygen levels above 5 ppm. They also can reduce the number of competitive fishing hours.

An alternative to the traditional weigh-in tournament is to conduct a "paper tournament," which doesn't require a weigh-in. "This is an especially helpful strategy during periods of extreme heat," Waters added.

More information on keeping bass alive, including the B.A.S.S.-produced publication, "Keeping Bass Alive: A Guidebook for Tournament Bass Anglers and Organizers," is available on the Commission's website, www.ncwildlife.org/fishing. The Commission has produced a "Keeping Bass Alive" card, suitable for downloading and printing that provides tips for both recreational and tournament anglers.

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