

# N.C. State Fair Canceled for 2020

Fair was scheduled to be held October 15-25

Since March, the North Carolina State Fair and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have been monitoring COVID-19 guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to determine operating plans determined to produce the largest annual event held in North Carolina. After careful consideration and due to the continued uncertainty of conditions come October, the N.C. State Fair will not be held in 2020. The fair was scheduled to take place Oct. 15 through 25.

"I can think of a thousand places I'd rather be today than here delivering this news," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "The State Fair is a tradition we all look forward to each year. It's a vital economic engine for local non-profits, community groups, small businesses and individuals. It's a time for family and friends to come together to celebrate everything that makes North Carolina such a great place to live. We waited as long as we could, hoping the numbers would take a turn and we'd be able to continue with our planning, but each day brought more challenges than solutions."

The decision to cancel this year's fair was based on the following:

- safety and health of visitors, vendors, competitors and staff,
- current COVID-19 statistics in the state,
- North Carolina's pause in Phase II of reopening thus limiting the size of gatherings,
- contracts that cannot be cancelled at the last minute without a financial impact on the N.C. State Fair and the vendor,
- and the long-term financial health of the N.C. State Fair.

Fair officials determined holding a fair that abides by the CDC and NCDHHS recommendations would not be possible. "We looked at so many different factors," said Fair Manager Kent Yelverton. "From social distancing, face masks, temperature checks and capacity limits to the true minutia most wouldn't think about until you are in the moment like social distancing on our shuttle buses, cleaning carnival equipment between riders, overlapping food lines and stringent cleaning schedules. To offer anything less than what fairgoers have come to know and love would be a disservice to our community and to us. There is no halfway when producing a fair. The people, the lights, the rides, the smells, the music...all of that contributes to an atmosphere that can only be felt during a fair."

August 16 marks the 60-day window until the planned opening day of the 2020 fair. The decision to cancel is being made now to mitigate expenses for an event that likely would not be able to open. The N.C. State Fair costs around \$6.8 million annually to produce. Many contracts currently in place have a 60-day stipulation for cancellation with no penalty. The N.C. State Fair is a self-supporting enterprise that has had 186 events canceled, resulting in an estimated \$2.3 million loss in revenue since February.

"The heart of the N.C. State Fair has always been and will continue to be our ability to showcase North Carolina agriculture. To stay true to that commitment, we will be holding our Junior Livestock Show and State Fair Horse Shows in October," Troxler said. "By utilizing both the Graham Building and Expo Center and spreading the junior show out through all 11 days of what would have been the fair dates, we will be able to host a livestock show that allows for proper social distancing. These kids have worked so hard all year to show at the State Fair, and I'm glad we've found a safe way to make that happen."

The N.C. State Fair Division will now shift gears to focus on hosting year-round events that can abide by CDC and NCDHHS guidelines and looking toward the future of the 2021 N.C. State Fair. "I can assure you we will be hard at work planning a great 2021 State Fair," Troxler said.

The N.C. State Fair has operated as the premiere agricultural exhibition in the state since 1853. This year's cancellation is not without precedent. From 1861-1868, the N.C. State Fair was canceled due to the Civil War and Reconstruction. In 1918, the N.C. State Fair was canceled due to World War I. In 1926 and 1927, there was no fair due to reorganization of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, the then-fair's operating board, was disbanded. The most recent cancellation was due to World War II from 1942-1945.

The 2021 N.C. State Fair is slated for Oct. 14-24 at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.

## Free Groceries Available to Eligible Families on Saturday, August 29

A new shipment of USDA foods will be distributed on Saturday, August 29, from 12:00 noon until 2 p.m., or as long as supplies last, at Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center (BRLC). Please note that neighbors will only be served once monthly with these items as long as they last.

The items are distributed on a first come, first served basis for eligible Anson County citizens.

All Ansonians who are seeking help with food will need to apply for assistance. (The new year for qualifying began October 1, 2019). Those neighbors who have not previously registered will be able to complete an eligibility application on Saturday. \* Families or family members who receive federal food assistance automatically qualify.

Parents are asked not to bring children due to limited seating space. Neighbors are always asked to please fill BRLC's parking lot first. Burnsville Fire & Rescue have made their parking area available for the overflow of neighbors who attend. Please do not arrive before 10 a.m. on Saturday.

All participants who plan to pick up food are asked to bring someone to help them if they need help, as BRLC will no longer be able to provide this support.

You can contact BRLC at 704-826-8737 for information, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. BRLC is located at 13349 Highway 742 North in Burnsville, across from the Fire Department.

For more information check [www.burnsvillele.org](http://www.burnsvillele.org).



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