



**COUNTY TRADITIONS**  
*Country Celebration*

**REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK**  
2026 KENTUCKY STATE FAIR

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- Section 1** — Contacts & Credentials
- Section 2** — Admission & Hours
- Section 3** — Special Days, Featured Events & Promotions
- Section 4** — Texas Roadhouse Concert Series
- Section 5** — World's Championship Horse Show
- Section 6** — Buildings & Attractions
- Section 7** — Entry Departments
- Section 8** — Kentucky State Fair Facts & Statistics
- Section 9** — Kentucky State Fair Timeline
- Notes**

# SECTION 1: CONTACTS & CREDENTIALS

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## Website & Social Media

For more information and continued updates, visit [kystatefair.org](https://kystatefair.org).

**Instagram:** @kystatefair

**X:** @kystatefair

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/kystatefair](https://facebook.com/kystatefair)

## Media Access & Credentials

### Media Interviews

For quotes or interviews, contact Ian Cox at (502) 367-5186 or [ian.cox@kyvenues.com](mailto:ian.cox@kyvenues.com).

### Media Access Badge

Media badges must be worn by any media member at the Kentucky State Fair. These badges will allow you to enter and exit the facility free of charge throughout the Fair. Credentials will be revoked if used by non-registered media — each person visiting the property must have their own badge.

All credentials must be requested in advance of the event through the [Media Credential Application](#).

### World's Championship Horse Show Access

The World's Championship Horse Show (WCHS) has separate media access that is good for all performances. A WCHS wristband is required to gain access to the rail area for photos. The only way to guarantee a seat for a horse show performance is to purchase a ticket.

## Kentucky State Fair Board

**Governor Andy Beshear**, Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky

**Dr. David Williams**, Chairman

**Joseph Goggin**, Vice Chairman

**Jonathan Shell**, Commissioner of the KY Department of Agriculture, Georgetown

**Lindy Casebier**, Secretary, Tourism Arts & Heritage Cabinet, Representing the Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky

**Dr. Laura Stephenson**, Vice President for Land-Grant Engagement and Dean, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, University of Kentucky

**Board Members:** Cleo Battle, Edward Bennett, Mike Berry, John Cox, Marshall Coyle, Brandon Garnett, Joe Goggin, Hans G. Poppe, Mike Poynter, Billy Ray Smith, Dr. David Williams

### **Ex-Officio**

Secretary Holly M. Johnson, Finance and Administrative Cabinet

Representative Suzanne Miles, District 7

Aiden Manley, FFA President (new officer coming in June 2026)

Case Shirrell, 4-H President (new officer coming in June 2026)

## **Kentucky Venues Staff**

**David Beck**, President and CEO

**Matt Johnson**, Chief of Staff, Kentucky Exposition Center

**Tony Schreck**, Chief Financial Officer

**Ellen Benzing**, General Counsel

**Ian Cox**, Executive Director of Communications

**Corinne Fetter**, Executive Director of Expositions

**Shawn Hensler**, Executive Director of Safety and Security

**Kevin McCoy**, Executive Director of Operations

**Tim Postlethwait**, Executive Director of Event Services

**Sierra Rojas**, Executive Director of Human Resources

## SECTION 2: ADMISSION & HOURS

### Hours of Operation

Note: Aug. 24 is Livestock Changeover Day — West Wing barns will be closed.

| Day     | Barns           | Outside           | South Wing,<br>East & West<br>Halls | North Wing /<br>Equine | Thrill Ville |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Aug. 20 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 21 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 22 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 23 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 24 | CLOSED          | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 25 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 26 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 27 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 28 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 29 | 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.                     | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.        | TBD          |
| Aug. 30 | 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. | 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. | 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.                     | CLOSED                 | TBD          |

### Gate Admission

Gate admission covers all attractions, displays, and shows at the Kentucky State Fair, with the exception of evening performances of the World’s Championship Horse Show, Thrill Ville, and access to Kentucky Kingdom.

**Children 5 & under:** Free

## Pricing

| Ticket Type                                   | Dates                         | Pricing   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Advance Admission & Unlimited Ride Wristband  | June 4 – July 19 @ 11:59 p.m. | Online / Kroger* / Ticket Office: \$9 (includes parking & fees) Online & Kroger*: \$30 Ride Wristband                               |
| Admission & Unlimited Ride Wristband          | July 20 – Aug. 19             | Online / Ticket Office: \$12 (includes parking & fees) Kroger*: \$9 (includes parking & fees) Online & Kroger*: \$30 Ride Wristband |
| Admission, Parking & Unlimited Ride Wristband | Aug. 20–30                    | At the gate: \$10 admission + \$10 parking<br>Online: \$12 (includes parking & fees)<br>Ride Wristband: \$35                        |

\*At participating [Kroger locations](#).

## Thrill Ville

Thrill Ville wristbands are good all day, any one day, and can be purchased online in advance at [Kystatefair.org/tickets](http://Kystatefair.org/tickets) or on site during the fair. Wristbands are valid for every ride in Thrill Ville, though height and weight restrictions may apply.

- Individual ride tickets are available.
- 45+ rides
- Popular cow popcorn buckets return!
- Kissel Entertainment is KultureCity certified — sensory kits available.

# SECTION 3: SPECIAL DAYS, FEATURED EVENTS & PROMOTIONS

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## Special Days & Featured Events

See the Daily Schedule for all times:

[kystatefair.org/daily-schedule](http://kystatefair.org/daily-schedule)

**Kentucky Commodity Group Appreciation Breakfast** - Thursday, Aug. 20 — 8 a.m. The Great Kentucky Proud Cookout Tent Sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture

**Opening Day Ceremony** - Thursday, Aug. 20 — 10:15 a.m. Fountain in front of Freedom Hall

**Kentucky Auctioneers Association State Contest** — Aug. 22 South Wing C Meeting Rooms — Witness the talent of auctioneers from around the state as they compete during a live auction.

**Largest Pumpkin & Watermelon Contest** — Aug. 22 West Hall — Marvel at some of the largest gourds to grow from Bluegrass soil.

**Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic** — Aug. 22–23 South Wing B Meeting Rooms — A highly competitive contest open to anyone ages 7 and up, with cash prizes.

**Military Sunday** - Sunday, Aug. 23 Military Sunday celebrates all who serve or have served our country. Free admission is available for military members, veterans, and their families (up to 4 people). Parking is not included.

**\$5 Monday** - Monday, Aug. 24 Admission is \$5 per person and includes parking. Fairgoers can also watch the evening performances of the World's Championship Horse Show. Free horse show tickets must be picked up at the Kentucky Exposition Center Box Office on the day of the show.

**Senior Day** - Tuesday, Aug. 25 All seniors 55 and over receive free gate admission. Parking not included.

**Sensory Awareness Morning** - Wednesday, Aug. 26 The Kentucky State Fair and Kissel Entertainment are partnering with FEAT of Louisville and Kentucky Autism Training Center to distribute free admission and midway tickets to fairgoers with sensory processing differences. The midway will operate with minimal lights and music to create an enjoyable experience for those with sensory sensitivities. Tickets are distributed through the above-mentioned partners.

**Sunshine Class** – Livestock Show for Exhibitors with Disabilities - Wednesday, Aug. 26 — 9:00 a.m. Broadbent Arena

**Annual Kentucky Ham Breakfast & Auction** - Thursday, Aug. 27 — 7:30 a.m. South Wing B, Room 104 Sponsored by Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation

**Championship Drive** - Thursday, Aug. 27 -- Broadbent Arena - Watch the best FFA and 4-H members compete alongside their livestock for the coveted purple banner.

**BEERFEST** - Saturday, Aug. 29 – The Hitching Post Tent (Lot L, outside the concert series area). Sample the best craft beers the Bluegrass has to offer. Additional purchase required.

## **SECTION 4: TEXAS ROADHOUSE CONCERT SERIES**

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**Texas Roadhouse Concert Series**

## **Included with Fair Admission — Lot L Outdoor Stage**

All free concerts begin at 8 p.m. with gates opening at 6:30 p.m. Seating is first come, first served. Accessible seating is available. Concerts take place rain or shine. A show may be delayed if there is lightning — announcements will be made and updates posted on the Kentucky State Fair app.

Thursday, August 20: Cooper Alan with special guest JD Shelburne\*

Friday, August 21: Midnight Star\* with special guest Digital Underground

Saturday, August 22: Black Stone Cherry\* with special guest The Goldy Locks Band

Sunday, August 23: Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder\* with special guests T.G. Sheppard and Wade Hayes

Monday, August 24: Cain with special guest Ben Fuller

Tuesday, August 25: Happy Together Tour featuring The Association, The Troggs, Chicago Lead Singer (1985-2016) Jason Scheff, Gary Puckett, The Fortunes, Ron Dante of the Archies & The Turtles, and The Vogues

Wednesday, August 26: Ernest with special guest Alex Miller\*

Thursday, August 27: Boys Like Girls with special guest TBD

Friday, August 28: Hairball\*

Saturday, August 29: Foghat and Kentucky Headhunters\*

\*=Kentucky artist

## **SECTION 5: WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP HORSE SHOW**

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### **World's Championship Horse Show**

**Freedom Hall — Saturday, Aug. 22 through Saturday, Aug. 29**

The Kentucky State Fair World's Championship Horse Show attracts spectators and competitors from around the world. Over 2,000 Saddlebred horses compete for more than \$1 million in awards during the eight-day event. First-place winners are recognized throughout the Saddlebred industry as true World Champions.

Live streaming is available for viewers at daily or entire-show rates. Connect to pay-per-view directly at [wchorseshow.com](http://wchorseshow.com) to see pricing.

### **Free Performances**

Free performances are held:

- August 22 at 11 a.m. (NEW for 2026)
- August 23 at noon
- August 24–26 and August 28–29 at 9 a.m.

Seating is available on the upper level of Freedom Hall. There are no free performances on August 27.

### **Paid Evening Performances**

- August 22 at 7 p.m.
- August 23–28 at 6:30 p.m.
- August 29 at 7 p.m.

Tickets for Aug. 22–27 are \$8; Aug. 28–29 are \$11. Tickets include a facility fee but do not include KSF Gate Admission. Tickets go on sale June 15 at 10 a.m.

Weeklong reserved seats include Kentucky State Fair gate admission for all 14 shows (six free and eight paid): \$184

### **Interviews & Credentials**

Request horse show interviews by contacting Ian Cox.

# SECTION 6: BUILDINGS & ATTRACTIONS

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## Buildings and Their Uses

**Note:** Livestock Changeover Day is Aug. 24 — West Wing barns will be closed.

### Broadbent Arena

dedicated 1977 — Livestock Competitions

### East Hall

dedicated 1976

**Entry Departments:** Antiques, Culinary, Fine Arts & Crafts, Hobbies, Homebrew Beer, Homemade Wine, Plants & Flowers, Textiles

### Freedom Hall

dedicated 1956

- Administrative Offices — West Side, Front
- First Aid Station — East Side of Lobby
- Freddy Farm Bureau — Front Porch
- Security & Police — Front
- Ticket Office — East Side, Front
- World's Championship Horse Show — Aug. 22–29

### Lot A

- **Strolling Shows & Family Activities**
  - Amazing Aydar
  - Sea Lion Splash
- **The BIG Tent** Featuring unique food, drinks, and entertainment. Dance and sing along to live music and try your hand at contests. Sponsored by Sivori Catering Inc. & Keg 1 River City, LLC.
- **The Great Kentucky Proud Cookout Tent** Savor all your Kentucky food favorites at this commodity tent. Sponsored by Kentucky Proud.

### Lot L

- Texas Roadhouse Concert Series Stage
- The Hitching Post Tent
- Twin Stunts Motorcycle Show

### North Wing

dedicated 2007

- Entries and Demonstrations (in the lobby)
- Saddlebred Café
- The Tack Shops

## Pavilion

dedicated 1956 — Livestock Competitions

## South Wing

dedicated 1991

- United We Stand at 250 Exhibit
- AgLand (Dairy Products Showcase, Discovery Farm, 4-H Cloverville, FFA)
- Health Horizons
- Kentucky Remembers
- Main Street Kentucky
- Pride of the Counties
- Rock N' Relax Baby Care Center
- Rescue Ridge and Safety Town
- Southland Dairy Farmers
- South Wing Shops & Sponsor Exhibits
- Special Exhibitions and Programs
- United We Stand at 250 Exhibit

**South Wing A Lobby:** Farm to Fair Cooking Stage, Media Day Visits

**South Wing B Lobby:** Blue Ribbon Stage

**South Wing C Lobby:** Family Stage

## West Hall

dedicated 1976

- **Entry Showcase:** Bees & Honey, Country Ham Show, Dairy Products, Egg Show, Field Seed & Grain, Fruits & Nuts, Tobacco, Vegetables & Melons
- Pork Chop Revue (in the West Hall Courtyard)

## West Lawn

- **Budweiser Tent** Live music, cold beer, and savory food. Sponsored by Standard Sales Company and Six Row Events.
- Agri-Golf

## West Wing

Livestock Competitions

# SECTION 7: ENTRY DEPARTMENTS

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## Entry Departments and Locations

**4-H Exhibits:** South Wing

**Antiques:** East Hall

**Bees & Honey:** West Hall

**Country Ham:** West Hall

**Culinary:** East Hall

**Dairy Products:** West Hall

**Eggs:** West Hall

**FFA Exhibits:** South Wing

**Field Seed & Grain:** West Hall

**Fine Arts & Crafts:** East Hall

**Fruits & Nuts:** West Hall

**Hobbies:** East Hall

**Homebrew Beer:** East Hall

**Homemade Wine:** East Hall

**Plants & Flowers:** East Hall

**Textiles:** North Wing Lobby

**Tobacco:** West Hall

**Vegetables & Melons:** West Hall

**Daily Schedule:** [kystatefair.org/daily-schedule](http://kystatefair.org/daily-schedule)

# SECTION 8: KENTUCKY STATE FAIR FACTS & STATISTICS

## Kentucky State Fair Facts

### Next Year's Fair

**123rd Kentucky State Fair:** Aug. 19–29, 2027

### Location

Kentucky Exposition Center, 937 Phillips Lane, Louisville, KY 40209 (since 1956)

### Acreage

540 acres at the Kentucky Exposition Center

### Indoor Space

More than 1.2 million square feet, all climate controlled.

### Fast Facts

- 70+ daily activities
- 300+ vendors offering a variety of food, toys, clothing, and more
- Approx. 20 locations with shows and activities throughout the day
- 70+ bands with performances within tents, lobbies, and at the Texas Roadhouse Concert Series
- 33,000+ entries highlighting the best of Kentucky in agriculture and general (based on 2025 data)
- \$15.2 million in estimated economic impact to Kentucky (including World's Championship Horse Show)

### Attendance Records

**All-time record:** 684,356 — set in 1994

| Year | Attendance       | Year | Attendance |
|------|------------------|------|------------|
| 2025 | 630,000          | 2014 | 515,937    |
| 2024 | 631,822          | 2013 | 615,648    |
| 2023 | 599,000          | 2012 | 599,854    |
| 2022 | 524,833          | 2011 | 605,565    |
| 2021 | 441,327          | 2010 | 602,897    |
| 2020 | Closed to public | 2009 | 621,795    |

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Attendance</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Attendance</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 2019        | 600,000+          | 2008        | 586,106           |
| 2018        | 614,470           | 2007        | 589,364           |
| 2017        | 609,555           | 2006        | 614,477           |
| 2016        | 564,937           | 2005        | 629,740           |
| 2015        | 601,672           | 2004        | 637,327           |

# SECTION 9: KENTUCKY STATE FAIR TIMELINE

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## Kentucky State Fair Timeline

**1816** Fayette County farmer Colonel Lewis Sanders organized Kentucky's first fair and stock show, five years after America's first fair and stock show in Massachusetts.

**1841** The first state fair in the United States took place in New York.

**1853** Two years after the first world's fair in London, Americans staged their own world's fair in New York. The first major, permanent fairgrounds in Louisville opened in Crescent Hill.

**1893** The first full "Midway" was created for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and some of the first "fair foods" gained popularity there.

**1901** Abram Renick, legislator from Winchester, sponsored the bill to create the Kentucky State Fair.

**1902** The newly formed Kentucky Livestock Breeders Association organized the first Kentucky State Fair at Churchill Downs, Louisville.

**1903** Owensboro won the bid to host the second Kentucky State Fair.

**1904** Due to a pending court case testing the constitutionality of state appropriations for the Fair, the State Fair was cancelled.

**1905** The third Kentucky State Fair was held in Lexington, where organizers lobbied to host the Fair permanently.

**1906** The Kentucky State Fair returned to Churchill Downs in Louisville for two consecutive years, and in 1908 Louisville was named the permanent site of the Kentucky State Fair.

**1908** The first permanent Kentucky State Fairgrounds was constructed in the Parkland neighborhood of western Louisville, opening for the September event.

**1914** A saddle horse stake at the Kentucky State Fair Horse Show became the richest purse in the nation; three years later, the Horse Show awarded its first world's championship.

**1916–1919** State Fair exhibits, attractions, and entries reflected wartime and U.S. involvement in World War I.

**1924** Daily radio broadcasts originated from the Fair for the first time.

**1930–1933** During the Depression, State Fair attendance declined, but the Fair Board implemented reduced admission fees and added an overnight campground for fairgoers.

**1937** Floodwaters covered the Fairgrounds in January and led to extensive repairs.

**1942–1943** Buildings at the State Fairgrounds were converted to defense industry uses, and the State Fair was cancelled.

**1944** As World War II continued, the State Fair was temporarily moved to Churchill Downs, where patriotic programs boosted the spirits of fairgoers.

**1948** Before Kentucky had its first commercial television station, TV broadcasting was demonstrated at the Fair.

**1950** Ground was broken for a new Fairgrounds and multi-purpose sports and entertainment center near the new airport and highway facilities.

**1956** Following years of plan changes and construction delays due to the Korean War, the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center (KFEC) was opened for the 1956 State Fair.

**1974** An April tornado caused widespread damage to KFEC.

**1986** Preview attractions in the new permanent amusement park at KFEC, Kentucky Kingdom, were opened in time for the Fair.

**2004** The 100th Kentucky State Fair was commemorated with nostalgic programs and a State Fair history exhibition.

**2006** North American Midway Entertainment took over Thrillway operations, and some popular exhibits were relocated due to the East Wing reconstruction.

**2007** A nearly \$60 million renovation was made to the North Wing in the Kentucky Exposition Center, creating new Exhibit Hall space.

**2011** Military Day was instituted at the Kentucky State Fair to recognize active and retired military.

**2012** The VanHook Brothers of Somerset broke a Kentucky State Fair record with their pumpkin, which weighed 1,074.5 pounds.

**2013** Kentucky Kingdom was reopened in the Summer of 2013.

**2016** World's Championship Horse Show added another performance day, extending the prestigious event to 8 days.

# NOTES

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