

2020

Dunn County Fair Annual Report



Deb Gotlibson
Dunn County Fair
9/3/2020



What a ride we have had this year as a county fair! Not at all what any of us would have expected.

In January, members of the Fair Board left the annual Wisconsin Association of Fairs' Convention like previous years, rejuvenated and excited to get home and plan the best fair ever. Back home, we dug in to finalize our schedules, make sure we had judges hired, worked on getting those last sponsors and how we could improve the fair this year. Many hours were put into the planning.

Meanwhile, at the same time, in a country far away from Wisconsin, a virus was brewing. We all knew what the news reports were saying about other countries and eventually some states, but we are in Wisconsin. We started asking ourselves, will it come here, will it affect us? Just what is COVID-19? I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that it would affect our fair.

Fast forward to March, COVID-19 is in Wisconsin, now what? As the state shut down, the board continued to plan and we hoped that our worst fears would not happen to our fair this summer. COVID-19 would be under control and we would host the fair as normal.

On the state level, fair boards across the state starting meeting via Zoom, which would become our new friend. We decided we needed to connect as fairs and discuss what was happening. We would get together weekly and talk, share ideas, concerns, etc. We had a great response with over 100 fair members attending those early meetings. Many, many ideas were shared, and one common thing we found was that our County Health Departments would become a vital part of our discussions.

And then it happened, the first fair cancelled in the State of Wisconsin. The heartbreak was felt across the state. As more cancellations or modification decisions were made, we discovered that we are #FairStrong! We determined early on that we will survive this! We learned that we could draft excellent press releases using the tools we had access to from the IAFE and from the discussion at our meetings. We withstood social media negativity and handled everything with grace and dignity. We even learned all the ingredients it takes to "make a fair". If by chance you have not read or heard about the article, check it out on the [WAF website](#). We all cried on each other's shoulders virtually and grieved at the loss of something that is so important in our lives.

In May, it was our turn to face that difficult decision. A joint meeting was held with the Facilities Committee and Fair Board. As a result of the discussion, the Facilities Committee recommended that the 2020 Dunn County Fair be cancelled to the public and only youth exhibits would be allowed; the County Board of Supervisors met and agreed with the decision of the Facilities Committee later in May. It certainly will not be the same fair for any of us this year.

The Fair Board quickly shifted gears and started to put together a new plan for holding a youth exhibitor fair. Contracts that were already in place for entertainment, the carnival and food and commercial vendors needed to be renegotiated or cancelled, judges needed to be contacted once we revised schedules. Refunds were issued to vendors that had already paid for space. A new theme (see above) was selected for the fair. These were only the first steps.

Working with KT Gallagher, we developed guidelines for exhibitors, and revised those guidelines eight times, as updates were received, and recommendations changed. We created signs to post encouraging social distancing and hand washing. We went on the hunt for supplies for cleaning and sanitizing areas that we would be using. We developed a login system to track everyone on the grounds, including wristbands that were required for everyone at the fair.

Since our grounds were closed to the public, some grandparents found a way to watch the animal shows by parking on the street and sitting in their vehicles or placing lawn chairs in the bed of pickups. Brian Winnekens, [WRDN Radio](#) in Durand, volunteered to

livestream the beef, swine, and dairy show on their radio station YouTube channel and Facebook page. We also shared the information on our Facebook page and virtual website. We had a lot of comments from parents and grandparents appreciating that they were able to watch the kids show.

Our Fair Coordinator, Sam Dekan, created a virtual fair to meet the educational and exhibit requirements of the fair. If you have not had a chance to visit our [Dunn County Virtual Fair](#), it is still available to view. I encourage each of you to take a walk through the fair from the comfort of your lazy boy! Analytics from social media indicate that we had 659 views the week of the fair, 659 views of the livestream, and 50 to 200 plus engagements on each post. 760 people viewed the virtual website from July 20-25. They visited from the comfort of their homes in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Virginia, North Carolina, California, Arizona, and Oregon! Did you catch our puns on Facebook – we enjoyed coming up with them and our followers were really engaged!



At the end of the fair, exhibits and exhibitors at the fair were 38% of last year (at entry close, we were at 50%). Cancelling shooting sports, food and clothing reviews, carcass clinic, and dog and horse events contributed to these areas along with exhibitors just deciding they did not want to participate or finish all of their projects this year. We have received many thank you notes from those that did exhibit and were glad that we did hold the modified fair.

The Fair Board would like to thank KT, the Facilities Committee and County Board of Supervisors for their support of the modified fair this year. Also thank you to Scott and the Facilities workers that assisted us with set-up and tear down.

For me personally with our exhibit only fair, it was like I was transported into another world. The grounds were empty, not the normal excitement in the air, none of normal smells and noises. We even had cattle tied to trailers in what is our food court area so families could place their trailers in the shade and practice social distancing.

What will 2021 bring? To be determined, I wish I had a crystal ball to see into the future! We will continue to maintain those conversations and follow recommendations of the Public Health Department in planning the fair. There are rumors out there regarding the status of fairs in 2021 and if they will happen, we all hope they do. The big question, of course, is what happens to COVID-19 as we move forward; will a vaccine be approved? In any event, we have all learned to look at our fair differently. We will be taking a hard look at keeping our exhibitors and visitors safe. We do not know what 2021 will bring but realize that every journey begins with a single step. And tough times never last, tough people do! As a fair, we all will continue to move forward to plan the best fair ever. We will come back in 2021 better and stronger than ever.

I invite you to view some of the photos from the fair on the next pages. You will find more on Facebook and on our virtual fair website.

#FairStrong!

Respectively submitted,
Deb Gotlibson, President

Since we did not have a Fairest of the Fair this year, we had some fun and selected a Fairest of the day.



Judging – a few examples of the entries this year.







