

HORSE EXPOS AND FAIRS

By Glen Eaton, Chair
State Horse Council Expo/Fair Group

This article is written to assist State Horse Councils that either already sponsor or want to start a horse expo or fair. It is written based on my experience of being a very active participant with the Minnesota Horse Expo for 13 years. Of course, no two horse fairs or expos are the same but we strive for the same end results—success!. Many State Horse Councils already have horse expos or fairs and we try to share our ideas with one another by telephone, e-mail, fax, etc. Also, many states are involved with the State Horse Council Committee which is a division of the American Horse Council

The first question to ask is what is the purpose of your State Horse Council's horse fair or expo? Is it a fund-raising event, an educational event, or both? I feel that the first priority should be educational with the fund-raising second. If the event is run right, it can and should be both.

If your state is in the planning of your first expo or fair, the first thing to look at is what facilities are available. Most states have state fairgrounds that can be used for this event and most are not that expensive. When looking at facilities, do they have room for you to expand? If you run a good event, it will do nothing but grow larger. As the event gets larger, we don't want to forget the quality of the event. The facility should have two large demonstration arenas, if possible, and two other lecture rooms. One of the most important items is providing adequate facilities to stall horses. Also, you will need plenty of space for display booths inside and outside. Planning your event will of course involve a committee to work with the facility, Fire Marshal, and the decorating contractor.

If you are planning your first horse expo or fair, it may take a good two years to get things planned right. The dates should be determined so they do not conflict with another horse expo or fair in your geographical area. The Horse Fairs and Expo Group of the State Horse Council Committee will be working to provide a schedule of events each year and a list of international keynote speakers. International speakers should be booked about 18 months in advance and then your program can be filled in with local speakers and events to make your event attractive to attendees.

Your event can work as a committee of your State Horse Council or as two separate corporations as Minnesota does--either way works. The horse expo/fair committee is in charge of the event and makes reports at each council meeting. If you want to know how Minnesota works, please call me at 952-922-8666. For a staff, you will need a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and many other subcommittee chairs such as Barn Manager, Sponsorship Chair, Promotion Manager, Program Chair, Arena Manager, Volunteer Manager, Security, and you should have an attorney on retainer. Also, your event will need someone in charge of passes and a ticket manager, which in some cases is part of the Treasurers position. As your event grows, other committees will have to be formed.

One of the most important parts of your event is your food vendors. This is never the same at each facility but in most cases, the facility will control what food vendors are available, but will work with you to make sure you have enough vendors and also a variety of food.

The state horse expo or fair can be one of the most important and satisfying events of the year. A lot of education can take place at these events and the profits can also be used for scholarships, grants, and assistance to many other equine areas in the state. In Minnesota, a committee of the Minnesota Horse Council works with the Minnesota DNR to develop trails and campsites. The committee gets a portion of the profits and also gets matching funds from the Minnesota DNR most of the time. Also the profits are used for other smaller committees within the horse council.

For more information on the Minnesota Horse Expo, please contact:

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