

# Counties prepare for a different kind of fair week

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

Fair week will look a lot different for most counties this year, but local youths will still have an opportunity to show off their hard work.

“We put together the best event we could for the kids,” Umatilla County Fair Coordinator Angie McNalley said.

Public events for the Umatilla County Fair — including the parade, concerts and rides — are canceled due to the pandemic, but exhibitors will be able to drop off static entries for judging, and 4-H and FFA students can bring their animal to the fairgrounds for an appointment with a live judge.

Fair week is Aug. 11-15. McNalley said it was difficult, early in the pandemic, to know what things might look like by August, but the fair board put together a subcommittee and they got to work to figure out what opportunities they could safely provide for 4-H and FFA students.

“We’re in regular talks with county commissioners and the health department,” she said.

There will be a schedule for exhibitors to be able to leave their static entries, such as produce and crafts, at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center the week before fair week officially starts. Entries will be judged and photographed, with photos posted online for browsing at the start of fair week.

There will also be a schedule for youths to be able to show their livestock to a judge in person on the fairgrounds, without an audience present. They will drop off their animals the night before, with the fair board taking responsibility for feeding the livestock on-site until the animal’s owner comes back the next day for showmanship. Afterward, a professional photographer will take a photo of the student with their animal.

The photos will be used for the Youth Livestock Auction, which in 2019 raised \$610,000. McNalley said some of the auction’s usual buyers will be on site, spaced 6 feet apart with masks on, while other people can watch a livestreamed video of the auction and place bids online.

She said some people have made comments mistakenly assuming that the fair will have twice as much money to work with in 2021, but that’s not how it works. The fair pays for itself through ticket sales, vendors and other revenue that won’t be coming in this year.

“Our money is made from the fair,” she said.

To cover the costs associated with the Youth Livestock Auction and judging this year, McNalley said some businesses have still been willing to be a sponsor, knowing that this year their sponsorship is basically a “straight donation of love” and won’t come with the usual free tickets and level of exposure to thousands of fairgoers.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File  
**Blair Bracher, 13, ties up his cow in the livestock barn during the Umatilla County Fair in August 2019.**

“I’ve always known this is a giving community, and now I’m seeing people who have been affected, and their business has been affected (by COVID-19), and they’re still giving,” she said.

McNalley said people can look on the Umatilla County Fair’s social media pages for additional updates as fair week approaches. During fair week, the Umatilla County Fair Court will also be posting videos to get people excited about the online exhibits and auction.

McNalley said the fair court, grand marshals, volunteers of the year and business of the year have all been invited to continue to represent the fair in 2021 since they haven’t had much of an opportunity to do so this year.

### Morrow County Fair making changes in 2020

The Morrow County Fair will also be reducing its usual celebration due to COVID-19.

Ann Jones, secretary for the fair, said 4-H and FFA youths will be able to come to the fairgrounds for a time slot to show their animal during fair week, Aug. 18-22. Students will also be able to contribute static entries to the usual 4-H categories, including cooking and fashion.

“It will look a lot different than we’re used to,” she said.

That Saturday, Aug. 22, will feature an online-only auction.

Jones said more specific details, including a link to

the auction, will be posted on the fair’s website and social media pages when fair week gets closer.

### Farm-City Pro Rodeo canceled for first time

The Farm-City Pro Rodeo canceled its annual rodeo for the first time since it began in 1988.

The rodeo, which usually takes place in the arena next to the fairgrounds during the Umatilla County Fair, announced in May that the board was canceling the 2020 fair, after Gov. Kate Brown announced that gatherings of more than 250 people would not be allowed in the state until at least September.

“In the meantime, make sure you grab a bottle of our Chute 8 Whiskey and Vodka and help us count down the days until August 11-14th, 2021, when we can see all our fans again!” the board of directors wrote.

Despite the rodeo’s cancellation, the Farm-City Open will still take place on Aug. 12. The annual golf tournament, organized by the rodeo and Sherrell Chevrolet of Hermiston, raises money for scholarships for students who participate in rodeo.

Organizer Kevin Fisher said the tournament at Big River Golf Course in Umatilla has been adjusted to maintain social distancing. This year people will register ahead of the event instead of in person, and will be able to form their own teams instead of being assigned a group.

# Door-to-door COVID-19 testing in Hermiston

The tests will be available July 25 and 26 and participants can expect to get results in 10 days

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Health experts from Oregon State University will be conducting door-to-door COVID-19 testing in Hermiston on Saturday, July 25, and Sunday, July 26.

According to a news release from the city of Hermiston, the trained field staff will have Oregon State University and Oregon Health Authority credentials and will be visiting randomly selected homes throughout the weekend. All residents of each home selected will be given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the study, which is designed to gather broader data about the spread of COVID-19 in a community.

Participants will be asked to sign a consent form and answer a few questions, then will be asked to swab the inside of their nose in their home while the field staff waits outside for them to place the sample outside their front door for collection.

The project is known as Team-Based Rapid Assessment of Community Level Coronavirus Epidemics (TRACE) and acts in coordination with OSU, OHA, and Umatilla County Public Health. The team has previously conducted studies in Bend, Corvallis and Newport.

According to the news release, results will be sent to participants by email or mail in about 10 days. The information will also be used by researchers to get a better idea of how prevalent COVID-19 is in Hermiston.

“TRACE and this weekend’s event are not affiliated with the city of Hermiston, and no city resources are being used in this effort,” the city stated. “The city is sharing this information to help improve participation and the validity of the results.”

For more information, visit <https://trace.oregon-state.edu>.

Hermiston had two new worksites on Oregon Health Authority’s weekly list of workplace outbreaks of COVID-19, released each Wednesday.

To protect privacy, OHA only names worksites with 30 or more employees, where at least five cases have been linked to the site. The case count includes employees who tested positive, and close contacts of employees who plausibly could have contracted the virus from the employee, given the timeline of symptoms for both parties.

According to the July 15 report, the Hermiston Walmart Distribution Center has had 15 cases linked to it, with the investigation into the cases starting on June 30. Marlette Homes had five cases linked to it, with an investigation started July 8.

In response to a question about how Walmart was handling the outbreak at its distribution center, the company sent a video of Walmart’s executive vice president of Supply Chain, Greg Smith, explaining

### ONLINE

To learn more, go to <https://trace.oregon-state.edu>

safety measures the company takes to protect distribution center workers from COVID-19. Those measures include temperature checks for everyone entering the center, masks, sanitation and social distancing.

Marlette sent an emailed statement that once they learn an employee tested positive, they notify all team members at that location, and instruct those who had close contact with the person to follow CDC guidelines for close contacts. The company said it also has general safety protocols in place, including daily temperature screenings, sanitation and face coverings.

“We wish our team members a quick recovery,” the email stated. “We will continue to keep our team informed as we learn more about the current cases.”

As of July 21, Umatilla County Public Health reported 11 deaths and 1,348 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Fourteen Umatilla County residents were hospitalized with COVID-19 as of July 21.

The county’s ninth and 11th deaths both took place in Regency Hermiston Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, according to a news release from UCo Health on July 21. The county did not provide information about the 10th death.



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