

FAIR DAYS

AUGUST
11-15

WESTERN MICHIGAN FAIR • MASON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS



a special publication of the **Ludington Daily News**



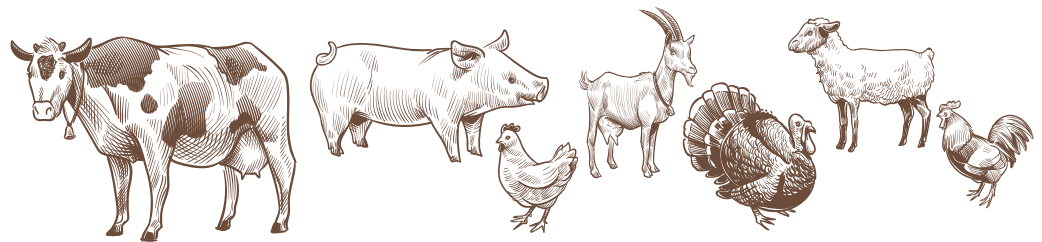
The West Michigan Livestock Council Invites you to the 2026 Youth Livestock Auction at the Western Michigan Fair

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Harness Racing Schedule

MONDAY, AUG. 10

- Great Lakes Stakes Harness Racing
- 4:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, AUG. 11

- Michigan Bred Colt Stakes Harness Racing
- 1 p.m.

Harness Racing again opens the Western Michigan Fair

Before the midway opens, before the first tractor hooks to the sled and before demolition derby cars crash into one another, horses take to the track at the Mason County Fairgrounds.

Harness racing once again opens the Western Michigan Fair schedule with Great Lakes Stakes Harness Racing at 4:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10, followed by Michigan Bred Colt Stakes Harness Racing at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 11, before the evening tractor and truck pull.

While today's races are held at the Mason County Fairgrounds near Scottville, the tradition dates back much farther.

In a 2019 Ludington Daily News column, local historian James Jensen traced Mason County's fair history

to the original fairgrounds at what is now Oriole Field in Ludington. After the Mason County Agricultural Society purchased the property in 1877, a large clay race track became the centerpiece of the annual fair.

Harness racing was the primary attraction, Jensen wrote, with horses pulling lightweight sulky carts around the oval while spectators watched from the grandstand.

The fair eventually moved to its current location near Scottville, where harness racing remained a staple for generations before disappearing from the schedule for several years.

When the races returned in 2017, then-Western Michigan Fair Association President Mike Stakenas said bringing

them back was a way to reconnect the fair with its agricultural heritage.

"It has been a number of years since we have held harness racing at the fairgrounds," Stakenas told the Ludington Daily News in 2017. "I think it is a great opportunity to exhibit some of our agricultural heritage to the community."

The races remain part of a larger Michigan tradition.

According to the Michigan Harness Horsemen's Association, Ludington is one of eight county fair stops on the Michigan Bred Colt Stakes circuit for young Michigan-bred Standardbred horses. The association has represented Michigan's Standardbred owners, breeders, trainers and drivers since 1947.

Unlike Thoroughbred racing, harness racing features horses pulling two-wheeled carts known as sulkies, with drivers seated behind the horse. Success depends on maintaining the horse's gait while negotiating the oval track at speed.

For fairgoers, the races offer a chance to experience one of the fair's oldest attractions before the week's grandstand entertainment shifts to tractor pulls, bump-and-run racing, rodeo competition, Supercross and the demolition derby.

Nearly 150 years after horses first raced at Mason County's original fairgrounds, harness racing remains one of the traditions most closely tied to the agricultural heritage of the Western Michigan Fair.

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Photos courtesy of Rob Alway, Mason County Press

10 Fair Experiences You Won't Want to Miss

1 Explore the Domestic Arts Building

Award-winning quilts, baked goods, canned foods, photography, crafts and the Homemaker of the Year competition showcase the creativity and talents of area residents. It's one of the best places to appreciate the skills and traditions that have long been part of the fair.

Where: Domestic Arts Building

2 Meet Blossom

New this year, Blossom, a life-size Holstein exhibit in Barn 17, introduces visitors to Michigan's dairy industry through an interactive educational display and mini-museum. It's a chance to learn more about one of Michigan's leading agricultural industries.

Where: Barn 17

3 Watch the Horse Shows

Horse competitions highlight the partnership between horse and rider, from halter classes and riding events to Friday's Fun Equestrian Games. Whether you're an equestrian enthusiast or simply enjoy watching skilled horsemanship, the arena offers something different every day.

Where: Horse Arena

4 Experience Harness Racing

Harness racing returns to the Western Michigan Fairgrounds for three days of competition, beginning with pre-fair racing on Sunday and Monday and continuing on Opening Day Tuesday with the Michigan Bred Colt Stakes. The races celebrate one of the fair's oldest traditions and reflect its agricultural heritage, when horse racing was a centerpiece of county fairs.

Where: Grandstand Track

5 Wander Through the Exhibit Buildings

Photography, fine arts, floriculture, horticulture, natural resources and folk arts reveal the creativity and talents of exhibitors from across the region. You'll find everything from prize-winning photographs to handcrafted artwork and floral displays.

Where: Exhibit Buildings



6 Look Up Tuesday Night

Following the West Michigan Pullers Tractor & Truck Pull, Great Lakes Fireworks lights up the sky in one of the week's signature events. Families have long gathered for the display, making it one of the fair's most popular traditions.

Where: Grandstand



7 Watch Glass Become Art

The Hot Glass Academy returns with live demonstrations showing how molten glass is transformed into colorful works of art. Visitors can watch artists at work throughout the week and learn about the glassmaking process.

Where: Commercial Area

8 Attend the Youth Livestock Auction

Even if you aren't bidding, the West Michigan Livestock Council Youth Livestock Auction is one of the fair's signature traditions. It's the culmination of months of work by local youth who have raised and cared for their livestock projects.

Where: Sale Arena

9 Browse Vendor Row

Take time to stroll through Vendor Row and the Commercial Building, where local businesses, community organizations and specialty vendors offer shopping, demonstrations and information throughout the week.

Where: Vendor Row & Commercial Building

10 Take in the Fair After Dark

As evening settles over the fairgrounds, the atmosphere changes. The midway glows with colorful lights, music drifts across the grounds, families gather for grandstand entertainment and the barns begin to quiet after a busy day. Whether you're watching Tuesday night's fireworks, enjoying an evening grandstand show or simply taking a leisurely walk through the fairgrounds, nighttime offers a different perspective on one of Mason County's favorite traditions.



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to all Western Michigan Fair Participants!



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No dairy cows, but plenty to learn: Western Michigan Fair creates dairy exhibit after historic change

STAFF REPORTS

For the first time since 1936, fairgoers attending the Western Michigan Fair will not see live dairy cows or calves in the livestock barns.

The change comes as Mason County now has only five working dairy farms, and none of those farm families have children enrolled in 4-H who can exhibit dairy cattle at the fair, according to Marcia Hansen, communications coordinator for the Western Michigan Fair Association.

To continue educating fairgoers about dairy farming, the Western Michigan Fair Association has transformed the dairy barn into an educational exhibit.

The association’s statement of purpose begins with “to help promote agriculture,” Hansen said, and the new exhibit continues that mission despite the absence of live dairy cattle this year.

At the center of the display is Blossom, a life-size black-and-white Holstein cow fabricated by Fiberstock Co. in Minnesota. Hansen said Blossom will stand on the raised platform in the dairy barn, where the former dairy parlor once operated.

Displays around Blossom explain how much water a dairy cow drinks each day, how many pounds of silage it consumes, how many flakes of hay it eats, how much manure it produces and how many gallons of milk it can produce.

Another display highlights dairy products, including cheese, butter, yogurt and ice cream.

The fair’s former milk house is being converted into a mini museum featuring both historic and modern artifacts used in the dairy industry. A continuous video will showcase modern dairy farming, and organizers hope volunteer docents will be available to answer visitors’ questions, Hansen said.

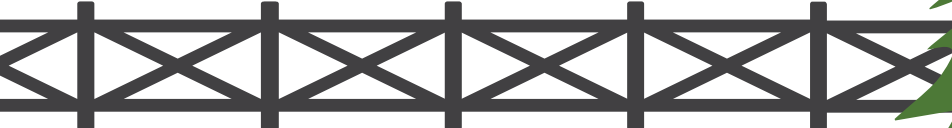
The educational project was made possible through support from the Robert R. and Joan Hasenbank Community Foundation Fund, Michigan Milk Producers, the Mason County Dairy Association and the Western Michigan Fair Association.

Hansen said the Mason County Dairy Association also expects to provide free milk on select days during the fair and will have educational materials available for visitors interested in learning more about dairy farming and dairy products.



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Western Michigan Fair – By the Numbers

Every summer, the Western Michigan Fair brings together agriculture, entertainment, competition and community. Here's a look at the fairgrounds—and the fair itself—by the numbers.

87

The Western Michigan Fair celebrates its 87th year in 2026.

50+

Acres make up the Mason County Fairgrounds.

27

Permanent buildings are located throughout the fairgrounds.

15

Volunteer board members oversee the Western Michigan Fair Association.

35 to 75

Age range of current board members, with a median age of about 47.

3

Full-time seasonal employees help operate the fairgrounds each year.

1

Part-time employee, one custodian and one part-time bookkeeper help keep the fairgrounds running throughout the season.

24,000+

People attended events at the fairgrounds outside of fair week in 2025.

21,000+

Visitors attended the 2025 Western Michigan Fair.

252

Exhibitors entered projects during the 2025 fair.

2,711

Individual exhibits were judged.

112

Youth exhibitors sold livestock projects through the West Michigan Livestock Council auction.

\$237,811

Total sales generated by the 2025 Youth Livestock Auction.

\$3,849

Raised for the Childhood Cancer Campaign.

\$3,141

Raised for the West Mich. Livestock Council Scholarship Fund.

\$1,965

Raised for the Sammi Bateson Memorial Fund.

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Recent Fairgrounds Improvements

- ✓ New Wi-Fi system installed across the fairgrounds.
- ✓ Four new security cameras added.
- ✓ Grandstand seating professionally repainted.
- ✓ New concrete sidewalk installed to the accessible grandstand ramp.
- ✓ Major renovation completed on Building 23.
- ✓ Improved ventilation in the Domestic Arts Building.
- ✓ New ceramic flooring installed in the arena concession stand.
- ✓ New privacy fencing and fabricated gates added.



Did You Know?

The Mason County Fairgrounds are active well beyond fair week. Throughout the year they host equestrian competitions, livestock shows, community festivals, educational events, job fairs, car shows, conservation programs and other activities that attract more than 24,000 visitors annually.

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Special Days at the Western Michigan Fair

Whether you're honoring a veteran, bringing the kids or taking advantage of special admission offers, the Western Michigan Fair features themed days and special activities throughout the week.

Every day at the Western Michigan Fair offers something a little different. From pre-fair harness racing to free admission opportunities and activities for veterans, children and seniors, visitors can plan their trip around the events and promotions that best fit their interests.

SUNDAY, AUG. 9

Pre-Fair Harness Racing

The fairgrounds come alive before opening day with pre-fair harness racing beginning at 4:30 p.m. The races provide an early opportunity to experience one of the fair's oldest traditions before the midway opens.

MONDAY, AUG. 10

Great Lakes Stakes Harness Racing

Another afternoon of harness racing begins at 4:30 p.m., continuing the pre-fair schedule and showcasing Michigan Standardbred competition.

TUESDAY, AUG. 11

Opening Day & Veterans Appreciation Day

The 87th Western Michigan Fair officially opens Tuesday.

Veterans receive **free gate admission** with proof of military service as part of Veterans Appreciation Day.

The day's grandstand schedule includes:

- 1 p.m. — Michigan Bred Colt Stakes Harness Racing
- 7 p.m. — West Michigan Pullers Tractor & Truck Pull
- 10 p.m. — Great Lakes Fireworks

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 12

Kids Day

Wednesday is dedicated to younger fairgoers with family-friendly activities and special midway promotions throughout the day.

The evening concludes with **TNT Bump & Run Racing** at 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUG. 13

Senior Citizens Day & Special Kids Day

Visitors **60 and older** receive **free gate admission** throughout the day as part of Senior Citizens Day.

From **noon to 2 p.m.**, the fair hosts **Special Kids Day**, an **invitation-only event** that provides children with special needs an opportunity to enjoy the fair in a welcoming, supportive environment.

The evening concludes with the **Super Kicker Rodeo**, preceded by a performance from country musician **Dewayne Spaw**.

FRIDAY, AUG. 14

Supercross Night

Motorcycle riders take center stage during **SJO Supercross** competition beginning at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUG. 15

Championship Saturday

The final day of the fair begins with the **Barnyard Boogie 5K** at 8 a.m.

Other highlights include the **Barn Brawl Youth Wrestling Tournament**, the **West Michigan Livestock Council Youth Livestock Auction**, and the **TNT Mid-Season Championship Demolition Derby** at 6 p.m.



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2026 Western Michigan Fair – Full Schedule of Events

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

(Many free pre-fair activities.
No Midway or Fair Food)

3:00 pm - Sheep Show

5:00 pm - Goat Show

4:30 pm - Harness Racing

6:00 pm - Still Exhibit Judging
(buildings not open until
judging is completed)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

Veterans Appreciation Day - veterans admitted free

Fair Entrance \$5.00 per person - 5 & under free

9:00 am - Swine Show

12:00 pm - Exhibit Buildings Open

12:00 pm - Horse Show

12:00 pm - Harness Racing

3:00 pm - Midway Opens -
to 11 pm wristbands available
daily - please check
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7:00 pm - West MI Pullers - Tractor
& Truck Pull
Grandstand Admission \$10.00

10:00 pm - Great Lakes Fireworks
choreographed to Music -
Grandstand Admission
free to fairgoers

11:00 pm - Midway Closes

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

Fair Entrance \$5.00 per person - 5 & under free

8:00 am - Horse Show

10:00 am - Beef Show

12:00 pm - Exhibit Buildings Open

12:00 pm - Midway Opens
5 pm available daily - please check
TJSchmidtCarnival.com
for current pricing

1:30 pm - Rabbit Show

5:00 pm - Midway Opens - please check
to 11 pm TJSchmidtCarnival.com
for current pricing

5:00 pm - Kid's Bike Drawing

5:30 pm - Western MI Fair 2026
Homemaker of the Year -
Announced in front of
Domestic Arts Building

7:00 pm - TNT Bump & Run Racing \$10
Pit Passes \$20

11:00 pm - Midway Closes

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

Fair Entrance \$5.00 per person - 5 & under free

**Senior Citizens (60 or older)
admitted free**

9:00 am - Poultry Show

12:00 pm - Exhibit Buildings Open

12:00 to 2:00 pm - Special Kids Day -
Children eligible for this special
event is by invitation only and
must be properly identified
with a name badge

12:00 pm - Dog Show

3:00 pm - Midway Opens - wristbands
available daily - please check
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3:00 pm - Read for Rides - sponsored by
to 11 pm Mason County Libraries and
TJ Schmidt Company

7:00 pm - Super Kicker Rodeo w/special
pre-show entertainment by
country singer Dewayne Spaw
Grandstand admission \$15

11:00 pm - Midway closes

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

Fair Entrance \$5.00 per person - 5 & under free

10:00 am - Fun Equestrian Games

12:00 pm - Exhibit Buildings Open

3:00 pm - Midway Opens - wristbands
available daily - please check
TJSchmidtCarnival.com
for current pricing

5:00 pm - Pedal Pull for Kids

7:00 pm - SJO Super Cross Racing
Grandstand Admission \$10
Pit Passes \$15

11:00 pm - Midway Closes

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

Fair Entrance \$5.00 per person - 5 & under free

8:00 am - Barnyard Boogie - 5K Race

9:00 am - Barn Brawl Youth Wrestling

11:00 am - West MI Livestock Council
Livestock Auction in Show/
Sale Barn

12:00 pm - Exhibit Buildings Open

12:00 pm - Midway Opens - wristbands
available daily - please check
TJSchmidtCarnival.com
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6:00 pm - TNT Demolition Derby
Grandstand Admission \$15
Pit Passes \$25

11:00 pm - Midway Closes



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Homemaker of the Year Tradition Lives On

The Western Michigan Fair's Homemaker of the Year competition rewards exhibitors whose talents span multiple creative disciplines while giving the winner an opportunity to compete for state-wide honors.

When Pete Wilson was named the Western Michigan Fair's Homemaker of the Year in 2025, he didn't just earn another blue ribbon. He became the first man to receive one of the fair's most prestigious honors.

His victory also highlighted a competition that has long been part of the Western Michigan Fair and gives its winner the opportunity to compete on the state level.

The competition is open to men and women age 20 and older from Mason, Oceana, Manistee and Lake counties. To compete, entrants must exhibit at least one project in five of eight categories: needlework, culinary arts, agriculture, fine arts, horticulture, folk arts, photography and floriculture. Contestants also prepare an educational poster explaining how to make one of their entered projects. A points system determines the winner, and previous winners must wait one year before competing again.

Winning the local title is only the first step.

According to Lisa Reiff, executive director of the Michigan Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, the Michigan Homemaker of the Year program traces its roots to the Michigan State Fair and has existed for at least 40 years.

When the Michigan State Fair in Detroit closed, county fairs across Michigan worked with MAFE to keep the competition alive by rotating the statewide contest among host fairs, Reiff said.

"Like most things at the fair, the contest has stayed current with the times but continues to have strong ties to the tradition of the program," Reiff wrote in an email to the Ludington Daily News.

While quilting, baking, sewing, canning and gardening remain at the heart of the competition, exhibitors today also compete with projects in photography, information technology, marketing and other creative disciplines, she said.

Today, only 16 Michigan county fairs sponsor Homemaker of the Year competitions, according to Reiff, making the Western Michigan Fair one of a select group continuing the tradition.

There was a time when the future of the competition was uncertain.

In 1999, the Ludington Daily News reported there were no entries for Homemaker of the Year. Fair officials cited declining participation and suspended the competition for that year.

The hiatus proved temporary.

After being named the 2007 Western Michigan Fair Homemaker of the Year, Lois Gielegheem advanced to the Michigan Homemaker of the Year competition. At the time, contestants completed an extensive questionnaire and were judged on communication, poise and community involvement in addition to their accomplishments at the county fair.

Barb Robidoux earned the 2015 title after entering about 150 exhibits that included canned goods, vegetables, flowers, artwork and antiques.

Julie Tews won in 2017 after entering 40 exhibits and earning 24 blue ribbons. A painter, gardener and floral designer, she claimed the title again in 2022.

"I just want everybody to understand that anybody can do it," Tews said after her second Homemaker of the Year title. "I wish everybody would try it."

In 2023, Christiana Griswold won in her first year of competition after entering projects in nearly every qualifying category.

"I was not expecting to win," Griswold said. "It's almost like a relief, like, 'All that work paid off.'"

Wilson's victory in 2025 marked the first time a man had received the Western Michigan Fair's Homemaker of the Year title, adding another milestone to the competition's history.

The Homemaker of the Year contest is just one part of the fair's competitive exhibits. In her annual report to the Mason County Board of Commissioners, Western Michigan Fair Association President Marcia Hansen noted that 252 exhibitors entered 2,711 exhibits during the 2025 fair, reflecting the depth of participation



in the fair's exhibition program.

Visitors walking through the Domestic Arts and Floriculture buildings this August won't just see blue-ribbon quilts,

paintings, canned goods and flower arrangements. They'll see the work of exhibitors competing for one of the fair's highest honors.



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Homemaker of the Year MILESTONES

- **1999:** Competition suspended after receiving no entries.
- **2007:** Lois Gielegem wins Western Michigan Fair Homemaker of the Year and advances to the Michigan Homemaker of the Year competition.
- **2015:** Barb Robidoux wins after entering about 150 exhibits.
- **2017:** Julie Tews earns the title with 40 exhibits and 24 blue ribbons.
- **2022:** Tews becomes a two-time Homemaker of the Year.
- **2023:** Christiana Griswold wins in her first year of competition.
- **2025:** Pete Wilson becomes the first man to be named Western Michigan Fair Homemaker of the Year.

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A First-Timer's Guide to the Show Ring

The livestock barns are among the busiest places at the Western Michigan Fair. Here's what to watch for — and how to get the most from your visit.

For many first-time fairgoers, stepping into the livestock barns can be a little intimidating.

There's a judge in the center of the

support the livestock shows and exhibits that remain at the heart of the fair.

Whether you're watching cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, rabbits, poultry or

ple leading them.

In showmanship classes, judges evaluate how exhibitors present and handle their animals. Confidence, control, attentiveness and proper handling all play an important role. In other classes, the emphasis shifts primarily to the animal itself.

According to the Western Michigan Fair Premium Book, exhibitors are expected to conduct themselves with courtesy and sportsmanship while demonstrating proper care and handling of their animals throughout the competition.

Every Species Has Its Own Standards

No two animal shows are judged exactly alike.

According to the Western Michigan Fair Premium Book, judges evaluate each species using standards appropriate for that animal and class. Market classes focus on qualities that make the animal desirable for meat production, while breeding classes emphasize traits associated with quality breeding stock.

Rabbits and poultry are examined individually on judging tables, while cattle, sheep, goats and swine are generally evaluated as they're presented in the show ring. Horse and dog classes vary depending on the competition.

The biggest animal doesn't necessarily win. Judges compare each entry against the accepted standards for its breed and class.

Appearance Matters

Preparing for the fair involves much more than bringing an animal to the grounds.

The Premium Book reminds exhibitors that they are representing both themselves and the Western Michigan Fair. It encourages attire that keeps the focus on the animal and notes that exhibitors should avoid clothing that distracts from their project.

Animals also are expected to be clean, healthy and well groomed before entering the ring.

Good Sportsmanship Counts

The Premium Book outlines expectations not only for exhibitors, but also for parents and supporters.

Participants are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship, treat judges, volunteers and fellow exhibitors with respect, and avoid unsportsmanlike conduct. The rules also emphasize humane treatment of animals and ethical competition.

Spectators are encouraged to enjoy the competition while allowing judges and exhibitors to concentrate on the class.



ring, exhibitors carefully positioning their animals and spectators lining the fence. It may look complicated, but you don't need a background in agriculture to appreciate what's happening.

Although many visitors come for the midway rides and grandstand entertainment, Western Michigan Fair Association President John Lammi said in a 2024 interview that the community continues to

dogs, every show represents months — and sometimes a full year — of work by exhibitors who have raised, cared for and prepared their animals for fair week.

Here are a few things to watch for.

Watch the Exhibitor, Too

The animals may be the stars of the show, but don't overlook the young peo-



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Did You Know?

The Western Michigan Fair is an open fair, meaning exhibitors do not have to belong to a 4-H club to participate.

Lammi said in 2024 that many youth exhibitors now participate through the West Michigan Livestock Council, while others exhibit through local 4-H clubs or as independent exhibitors.

The Barns Are More Than Displays

The livestock barns are temporary homes throughout the week.

Exhibitors are responsible for feeding, watering, grooming and caring for their animals every day of the fair. Clean stalls, fresh bedding and healthy animals are all part of the responsibility that comes with exhibiting.

For many families, preparation for the Western Michigan Fair begins months before opening day. Animals are selected, fed, groomed and trained long before they ever enter the show ring.

What Do the Ribbons Mean?

Awards vary by department, but many livestock shows recognize class winners before selecting Champion and Reserve Champion animals. Some departments also award Grand Champion or Best of Show honors.

Showmanship awards are different. Rather than recognizing the animal, they honor the exhibitor's ability to prepare, present and handle the animal in the show ring.

For many exhibitors, earning a ribbon is gratifying, but the experience and skills

developed throughout the project are just as important.

What Happens After the Fair?

For many exhibitors, the Western Michigan Fair marks the end of months of preparation—but not necessarily the end of the journey.

Market animals are often sold through the West Michigan Livestock Council Youth Livestock Auction, allowing exhibitors to earn money that may be reinvested in future livestock projects, equipment or educational expenses.

Breeding animals typically return home after the fair. Many continue as part of breeding programs or are exhibited at additional county fairs, breed shows and livestock exhibitions.

For youth involved in 4-H, FFA and the West Michigan Livestock Council, the lessons don't end when the ribbons are awarded. Caring for animals, maintaining records, developing leadership skills and practicing good sportsmanship continue long after fair week.

For many families, planning for next year's fair begins almost as soon as this year's ends.

Ask Questions

One of the best parts of visiting the barns happens after judging concludes.

Many exhibitors are happy to answer questions about their animals, explain what they've learned through 4-H, FFA or the West Michigan Livestock Council, or describe how they prepared for the fair.

For first-time visitors, those conversations often become one of the most memorable parts of the fair.

As Lammi noted in 2024, the lessons



learned in the barns extend well beyond the show ring.

"These kids have worked with their animals, they have learned hard work ethics, what it takes to put food on the table," Lammi said. "They're all amazing aspects for these kids to learn."

That's why longtime fair supporters encourage first-time visitors to spend a little time at the show ring. The ribbons tell only part of the story. The real reward is watching months of dedication, responsibility and learning come together in just a few moments before the judge.

Don't Miss the Animal Shows

Whether you're interested in livestock judging or simply want to learn more about the animals exhibited at the fair, here's when to catch the action in the show ring.

MONDAY, AUG. 10

3 p.m. — Sheep Show
5 p.m. — Goat Show

TUESDAY, AUG. 11

9 a.m. — Swine Show
Noon — Horse Show

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 12

8 a.m. — Horse Show
10 a.m. — Beef Show
1:30 p.m. — Rabbit Show

THURSDAY, AUG. 13

9 a.m. — Poultry Show
Noon — Dog Show

FRIDAY, AUG. 14

10 a.m. — Fun Equestrian Games

SATURDAY, AUG. 15

11 a.m. — West Michigan Livestock Council Youth Livestock Auction

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Grandstand Offers Something for Every Fairgoer

SCOTTVILLE — While carnival rides, livestock shows and exhibit buildings draw visitors across the Mason County Fairgrounds during fair week, the grandstand once again will serve as the hub of the Western Michigan Fair's biggest attractions.

The entertainment schedule begins even before the fair officially opens.

Harness racing kicks off the week's activities with pre-fair competition Sunday and Monday, followed by Michigan Bred Colt Stakes Harness Racing on Tuesday afternoon. The races continue one of the fair's oldest traditions before the grandstand shifts to a week of motorsports, rodeo competition and fireworks.

Tuesday packs the most activity into a single day. Michigan Bred Colt Stakes

Harness Racing begins at 1 p.m., followed by the West Michigan Pullers Tractor & Truck Pull at 7 p.m. The evening concludes with the annual Great Lakes Fireworks display choreographed to music.

The action continues Wednesday with TNT Bump & Run Racing, where drivers navigate an oval track in a contest that rewards both speed and survival.

Thursday brings the Super Kicker Rodeo to the grandstand. Bull riding, barrel racing, roping and other rodeo events highlight the evening, which opens with a performance by country musician DeWayne Spaw.

Motorcycles take center stage Friday as SJO Supercross riders tackle a challenging course of jumps, turns and technical obstacles.

The grandstand finale comes Saturday with the TNT Mid-Season Championship Demolition Derby. One of the fair's most popular traditions, the derby pits drivers against one another until only one vehicle remains operational.

Although each event appeals to a different audience, together they reflect the Western Michigan Fair's blend of agriculture, motorsports and family entertainment.

The grandstand itself has long been one of the fairgrounds' signature gathering places. In 2011, Mason County approved a \$120,000 loan to help the Western Michigan Fair Association replace the deteriorated grandstand roof after the original roof was removed because of safety concerns. The fair association repaid the loan over the following several

years, preserving one of the fair's most recognizable venues.

The fairgrounds continue to see improvements. In her 2025 annual report to the Mason County Board of Commissioners, Western Michigan Fair Association President Marcia Hansen reported that the grandstand seating had been professionally repainted. Other recent projects included a new concrete sidewalk to the grandstand handicap ramp, a new Wi-Fi system across the fairgrounds, four additional security cameras, renovations to Building 23, improved ventilation in the Domestic Arts Building, new ceramic tile flooring in the arena concession stand, new privacy fencing near the 4-H and harness racing restrooms, and newly fabricated entrance gates.



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE GRANDSTAND

From harness racing to horsepower, every day offers a different experience at the Fair

Harness Racing

Sunday, Monday & Tuesday

Best for: Horse lovers, families and history enthusiasts.

What you'll see: Standardbred horses pulling lightweight two-wheeled sulkies as drivers compete around the oval track.

Did you know? Harness racing is one of the fair's oldest traditions and traces its roots to Mason County's earliest agricultural fairs.

West Michigan Pullers Tractor & Truck Pull

Tuesday • 7 p.m.

Best for: Motorsports fans, farm families and diesel enthusiasts.

What you'll see: Modified tractors and

trucks attempt to pull an increasingly heavy sled farther than the competition. As the sled moves, the weight shifts forward, making every foot more difficult.

Listen for: The thunder of high-horsepower engines.

Great Lakes Fireworks

Tuesday • 10 p.m.

Best for: Everyone.

What you'll see: A fireworks display choreographed to music closes Tuesday's festivities.

Tip: Grandstand seating is free for the fireworks.

TNT Bump & Run Racing

Wednesday • 7 p.m.

Best for: Families and racing fans.

What you'll see: Compact cars race an oval track where contact is part of the competition. Drivers must balance speed with avoiding damage that could end their race.

Super Kicker Rodeo

Thursday • 7 p.m.

Best for: Families and fans of Western traditions.

What you'll see: Bull riding, barrel racing, roping and other rodeo events.

Bonus: Country performer Dewayne Spaw opens the evening with live music before the rodeo.

SJO Supercross

Friday • 7 p.m.

Best for: Motocross fans and adrenaline seekers.

What you'll see: Motorcycle riders race over jumps, berms and technical obstacles in one of the week's fastest-paced events.

TNT Mid-Season Championship Demolition Derby

Saturday • 4 p.m.

Best for: Anyone who enjoys action-packed motorsports.

What you'll see: Drivers intentionally collide until only one vehicle remains running.

Tip: Arrive early. The demolition derby traditionally draws one of the week's largest grandstand crowds.

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Fairgrounds Stay Busy All Year Long

When the final carnival truck leaves town and the last blue ribbon is awarded, another season is already beginning at the Mason County Fairgrounds.

While the Western Michigan Fair remains the association's signature event each August, the 50-acre fairgrounds serve as one of Mason County's busiest community venues throughout the year.

According to Western Michigan Fair Association President Marcia Hansen, more than 24,000 people attended events held outside the fair during 2025.

"Western Michigan Fair Association hosted many events outside of the fair itself, continuing as a vital, year-round hub for local agriculture, entertainment and being part of the community," Hansen wrote in her annual report to the Mason County Board of Commissioners.

The calendar begins in the spring with preparations for another busy season.

Throughout the year, equestrian competitions bring riders from across Michigan. The fairgrounds host Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association competitions, Shoreline Youth Shows, Mason County Saddle Club events, Four Seasons horse shows, the Spartan Spectacular and the Harbor Classic.

Agriculture remains at the center of the schedule.

The Great Lakes Beef Classic, Michigan Great Lakes Hog Spectacular and Mason-Lake Conservation District tree sales attract producers and exhibitors from around the region while reinforcing the fairgrounds' agricultural mission.

Community events are equally diverse.

During 2025, the fairgrounds welcomed the Festival of Lights, All American Circus, TNT Demolition Derby, Michigan Works! job recruiting events, the Pere Marquette Motoring Club Car Show, MOMster Bash Halloween celebration, Love Out Loud tent revival and Community Cats TNR fundraisers.

Keeping the fairgrounds operating requires year-round work.

Hansen reported that the association employs three full-time seasonal staff members, along with part-time office, custodial and bookkeeping personnel. A 15-member volunteer board oversees the operation and continues investing in the facilities.

Recent improvements include professionally repainting the grandstand seating, installing a new concrete sidewalk to the grandstand handicap ramp, expanding Wi-Fi throughout the grounds, adding four security cameras, renovating Building 23, improving ventilation in the Domestic Arts Building, installing new ceramic tile flooring in the arena concession stand, adding new privacy fencing near the 4-H and harness racing restrooms, and fabricating new entrance gates.

For many people, the Mason County Fairgrounds come alive for just one week each August.

For the volunteers, employees, exhibitors and organizations who use the grounds throughout the year, the fairgrounds rarely stand still.

Barnyard Boogie Kicks Off Fair's Final Saturday

Before the Youth Livestock Auction, before the midway fills with fairgoers and before the demolition derby closes out the week, runners and walkers will hit the course for the Barnyard Boogie 5K.

The race begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 15, at the Mason County Fairgrounds, opening the final day of the 87th Western Michigan Fair. Participants may choose either the 5K run/walk or a 1-mile fun run. Organizers describe the course as flat and fast, and all participants receive a finisher medal. Overall male and female winners receive trophies.

The Barnyard Boogie was created by former 4-H exhibitor and Ludington High School graduate Andrea

Shoop after the longtime Fair Stampede came to an end. Shoop launched the event to benefit the Childhood Cancer Campaign, a local nonprofit that supports families of children with cancer.

Race-day registration and packet pickup begin at 7 a.m. at the fairgrounds. Registration forms are available through the Western Michigan Fair website.

After crossing the finish line, participants can spend the day enjoying one of the fair's busiest Saturdays, including the Barn Brawl youth wrestling tournament, the West Michigan Livestock Council Youth Livestock Auction and the TNT Mid-Season Championship Demolition Derby at 6 p.m.

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