

Exhibition Park

Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Overview of Agricultural Events Produced Outside the Fair

Introduction

First of all, I should point out that, other than professional rodeo, we only produce agricultural events outside the fair. I think this is the result of having very little space to work with in Lethbridge, along with a trend in this direction that has been in place in Canada for some time. I started in this industry as the Manager of Agriculture Events at Prairieland Park, Saskatoon in 1993. At that time I was responsible for nine annual agricultural events, only one of which was produced during the Fair. As such, this approach is basically all I have known in my 16 years in the Exhibition business.

That said, I will provide a brief overview of the events we produce here in Lethbridge, some for the revenue, and some for the contribution to the industry.

Revenue at Exhibition Park

In overall terms, it may help to first understand the revenue generators at Exhibition Park on an annual basis, to help understand the role that our activities play not only in fulfilling our mandate, but in keeping us sustainable as an organization. As such, following are the top five revenue generators in Lethbridge>

1. Ag Expo – Our grain industry trade show featuring, equipment, seed, crop protection, and ag support companies. This is a three day trade show in spring that we have been producing in its current format for over 30 years. The net revenue to the Exhibition is approximately \$250,000 to \$275,000 annually.
2. Live Horse Racing – This is not directly produced by Exhibition Park, but by a private operator that leases our facilities. Approximately 50

- live race days are produced, and the operation also includes a 100 slot Racing and Entertainment Centre (Casino). The annual lease payments to Exhibition Park are approximately \$250,000.
3. Home & Garden Trade Show – Focusing on urban homeowners, but also including a significant component of smaller equipment manufacturers and dealers targeting those that have smaller “acreage” type land holdings. Net revenue annually is approximately \$200,000.
 4. Facility Rentals – Exhibition Park was involved in the production of over 1,000 event days in 2009. The vast majority of these events were produced by other organizations that rented our facilities, event though we play a significant role in the production of many of these events. These rentals generated about \$240,000 in revenue. (Only a percentage of these rental events would be considered agricultural.)
 5. Whoop up Days Summer Fair – Finally we get to our summer fair, which includes midway, trade show, family entertainment, nightly concerts and professional rodeo. While it is still considered in the community to be our “flagship” event, it comes in 5th in terms of generating revenue for us, with annual net revenues of approximately \$150,000. It is worth noting that our summer fair is still among the largest generators of gross revenues in Lethbridge, the high cost of producing it on our footprint results in the smaller net revenues.
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Additional Agricultural Events

Along with those listed above, we produce several other agricultural events throughout the year...some are starting to grow revenues, while others are considered to be consistent with our mandate, even though they break even or cost money for the organization. These include the following:

Farmers’ Market - Produced throughout the summer with 30 market days during the season. This has been a long time “break even” event for us but is showing signs of significant growth in recent years with consumers’ growing interest in this like buying local, and buying organic. We see some strong potential for this program in the next five years.

Aggie Days – This is our agricultural Awareness and Education program, running for three days in mid February. While there is a cost to producing this event we see a value in helping the industry by interpreting the food

chain to the consuming public. About 3,000 school age children and about 1,000 members of the general public view the event annually.

Spring Rodeo – Even though we produce a major professional rodeo during our summer fair, we also produce a professional rodeo in the spring, which is seeing some recent growth with the addition of a small trade show as well as a cabaret.

Others – We also produce a few smaller agricultural events during the year, but not always on a consistent basis, and none with a significant impact on the organization.

Conclusion

As you can see from the information above, those events and activities at Exhibition Park that happen throughout the year have a significant impact on our sustainability, as well as the fulfillment of our mandate. That said, it is also worth noting that none of these events has been “an overnight success.” It takes significant effort, time and investment in order to establish these shows in the marketplace. It is an effort that we have been unable to duplicate in recent years in our attempt to get other similar trade and information type events established in Lethbridge. We continue to search for that magic formula, and will keep you posted!

Also, photo samples of the events referred to above have been included for your information.

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