

OAAS GAZETTE

COVID-19 Special Edition.

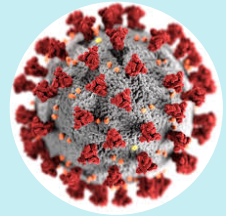


Greetings from the OAAS.

As we have said in previous email, these are certainly unprecedented times. Who would have thought when many of us got together at our Convention in February how much our day to day lives would change since then? It is simply unimaginable.

Our hearts go out to all those that have been directly affected by COVID-19 – whether it be the sickness or loss of a loved one; loss of job or closing of their business or not seeing loved ones due to the physical distancing that is now required.

We are saddened for those Agricultural Societies that have had to make the very difficult decision to cancel their Fair and other events this year. We feel for those fairs that are still determining whether to proceed as usual this year or deciding that they must look at other options or even postpone (as some fairs have so positively stated) until 2021.



Check out page 4 for items to consider for decisions for your fair



Check out the last page for social media links



Website updates on page 2 and 3

Life as we know it has changed. Hopefully never again will we take for granted the hug of a grandchild, child, parent, sibling or friend; the ability to go to the fair or the beach, go for a walk, go to work or shop for groceries. May we truly appreciate the unappreciated that put their lives on the line every time they go to work to ensure that we are healthy and protected and have food or other necessities as well as the farmers that work tirelessly to produce the food that we eat.

This time has been difficult for many of our fairs, but I know you are determined to persevere and be stronger than ever. We need to stay positive and look to the future. I feel that with the increase in baking, crafts, gardens by many of the people that are self-isolating that the growth in entries for next years' exhibits could be spectacular. People are volunteering more than ever in their communities – we should work to tap into that potential for new volunteers for our Agricultural Societies and Fairs.

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IMPORTANT: If you are postponing, modifying or cancelling your Fair, please send or email confirmation or your press release to manager@oasfairs.com. We will not update that information on our website without official notification.

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Updated Websites

We are pleased to announce that our webmaster has been busy updating our two websites.

A. www.ontarioagsocieties.com - there has been some changes to the layout and colours. The search engine is new so it should be easier to search for information. Most of the tabs and the information contained in them is very similar – we have renamed/ added a couple of tabs and rearranged some information - here are the highlights of those changes

1. **‘MEMBER SERVICES’** tab is now **‘AG SOCIETY INFO’**
 - ‘Information pertaining to Judges’ Lists and Judging Program has been moved under 2 new categories:
 - i) ‘Judges Lists, Judging Schools and District Directors Information’
 - ii) ‘Judging Program Information’.
 - ‘*General Information*’ category contains the OAAS Logos, Livestock Traceability info, etc.
2. **‘COMMUNICATION’** tab – added a **NEW** **‘Subscribe to Our Mailing List’** option. Make sure you don’t miss out on any information from the OAAS and subscribe to our mailing list to get our newsletter and other information that we email out.
3. **‘ABOUT US’** tab - added **NEW** category – **‘OAAS 175th Information’** for old photos, videos and information related to the OAAS 175th Anniversary in 2021.

4. **NEW** 'COVID-19' tab – all information related to COVID-19 and links to the COVID-19 video call recordings

B. www.ontariofairs.com – has been revamped. There are still 3 options to locate a fair –'Fairs by Location' (by District list or Google Map), 'Fairs by Name', 'Fairs by Month'. There is a new search option on these pages – you can search by fair or agricultural society name, month, location, etc.

Please note – if any information on your Fair's page on our website is incorrect, (i.e. dates, website, contact names) your Agricultural Society rep must log into AssistExpo and update the incorrect information so your information can be updated on the website.

DO NOT send corrections directly to the Manager.

IMPORTANT – check the links for your Agricultural Society website and Facebook on your Fair's page on the OAAS website – I have come across a few broken or incorrect links already.

Weekly COVID-19 Zoom Webinars

Our weekly COVID-19 webinars have proved to be very popular so we will continue to hold them on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 pm for as long as there is interest from the Agricultural Societies.

We send an email to Agricultural Societies the week prior to the call and ask them to share with their directors. We also share the information on our website and Facebook. The link to register for each call is located at [HERE](#). NOTE: You can be sent notices for these webinars by signing up for our mailing list.

We also post a recording of each webinar plus any additional information relating to that call on our website as well - [HERE](#). We have been fortunate to have some excellent speakers – we suggest you take the time to watch these videos if you were not able to attend the webinars.

We are not able to accommodate all the suggested topics for future webinars, but if you have any suggestions, please email manager@oaasfairs.com

OAAS 175th Anniversary in 2021

The 175th Anniversary Committee has developed two '175th Anniversary Competitions' for the 2021 Convention - [HERE](#).

Check out the *OAAS 175th Information*” category under the 'ABOUT US' tab for old photos, videos and other OAAS175th Anniversary information.

IMPORTANT: If you have any photos or memorabilia from the OAAS, your District, Agricultural Society or Fair that you would like to share, please send a photo to manager@oaasfairs.com. Please include fair name, date, location and names, if available.

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Items to Consider for Decision Making on the Future of Your Fair with COVID-19.



We have put together a collection of information and comments from different people, organizations and Agricultural Societies that you may wish to consider when you are making decisions about how your Agricultural Society will proceed this year.

If you have specific questions about insurance, contracts or government directives, etc., we recommend that you check with an expert - i.e. your insurance broker, lawyer, accountant or local public health department.

GENERAL THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS.

1. Ensure to consult your volunteers and membership – especially prior to making the decision to move forward with your fair. Will they be available to assist with your fair or are some of them in high risk categories due to health or age and will not be available?
2. Community – we anticipate social distancing may be a long term social measure and large gatherings will continue to be discouraged for some time. Even if some constraints are lifted, it may take some time for people to trust attending large events.
3. Local residents may still be in self isolation, particularly your senior population as they are the ones most vulnerable to this virus.
4. Federal, Provincial or Municipal governments could change or restrict activities at any time, and thus close your event at the last minute.
5. Facilities – will they be available? 1) Are your grounds being used for COVID-19 purposes? 2) if your Fair doesn't own their own grounds – municipal or other properties be allowed to host events or will be those facilities be closed? If you don't own your own facilities, contact the facility representative to discuss your Agricultural Society's plans.
6. If your fair delays making a decision on moving forward and has to plan your fair in a shorter than usual planning time, will your community/city be able to help expedite permits such as licensing, food permits, hydro/electrical, TSSA and any other permits that can usually take 30 - 60 days during normal times?
7. Documentation: everything should be documented by the board extremely well, and due diligence and full disclosure is a must for the directors and board at this time. Leave no stone unturned. Ensure you have accurate and complete minutes for all meetings (include recorded numbers for all votes).
8. Contact your entertainment, midway, concessions and vendors to determine their status for the season – we are aware of one midway company that is not operating this summer.
9. Does your area have a large seasonal population, who may not be around in the same numbers this summer season?
10. What are the liability issues if people get sick and it can be traced back to visiting your fair?



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX – LOOK AT ALL THE OPTIONS.

1. If you can't hold your fair this year – try to be positive – a couple of fairs are spending this year working and planning to be bigger and better in 2021; some are advertising as postponed to 2021
2. Join forces with another fair or event to hold some activities for the community
3. Hold portions of your fair at a later fair i.e. competitions
4. What alternatives are there if you can't hold your fair – i.e. virtual events for some or all of your Fair activities
5. If you have to make the decision to cancel, don't just mention you are cancelling – mention future plans at the same time – ensure that people to continue to check your website or FB for other activities
6. Smaller events later in the year
7. Continue on with certain events i.e. auctions and scholarships, Ambassador program

COMMUNICATION

1. Continue to keep in contact with your Directors and membership
 - Use videoconference or tele-conference for meetings and other get-togethers. A free version of Zoom that allows 40-minute calls is available. A full version of Zoom which allows unlimited calls with up to 100 participants is \$200 Canadian per year. Zoom allows people to participate by phone and/or computer
 - Send emails to keep Directors and members updated
 - Call to check on people – especially keep in touch with some of your older Directors and members who may be feeling more isolated. Check to see if any of them need groceries or other items picked up.
2. Keep in contact with your municipal, provincial and federal government and health department representatives
3. Keep in contact with local businesses and organizations

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND SANITATION

1. Consult Government directives regarding physical distancing and large gatherings.
2. Consult with local health unit for their advice about any special physical distancing requirements in place in your area that would affect your fair and its attendees.
3. Consult with local health unit regarding required practices for sanitation and money handling for midways, vendors, concessions, etc.
4. The virus lasts 72 hours on surfaces -- will the judges want to each touch or taste 100 entries dropped off that morning?
5. Gloves, sanitation supplies and wash stations for Judges and volunteers working with exhibits
6. Gloves, Sanitation supplies, mask and wash stations for people at the gate
7. Do you allow cash or restrict to debit, credit or pre-purchased admission and midway tickets?
8. If your fair or event is moving forward, prepare your budgets for extra bathrooms, wash stations, medical information, signage and supplies for the public

9. Is social distancing something you can do on your fairgrounds? Can you set up the layout of your activities to make social distancing possible to encourage the public to attend?
10. Should your Agricultural Society encourage or make wearing of masks, or other social distancing mandatory?
11. Will the midway sanitize each ride surface after people get off before letting the next group on?
12. Concessions and vendors - Do you allow them to use cash or restrict to debit, credit?
13. Petting Zoos – are they a risk if multiple people are touching them?

CONTRACTS

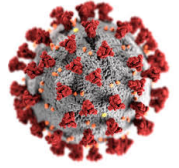
1. Check your contracts for your Facilities, entertainers, vendors, midways, etc. – whether they are signed or not yet signed Is there anything in them regarding “*Force Majeure* – acts of God, government authorities, natural disasters, or other emergencies”.
 - a. One Fair on a call last week found that their contracts were worded that they were still responsible even in the case of a such an emergency. They have reworded their contracts.
2. You should have a COVID-19 clause in all new contracts – the ‘*Force Majeure*’ clause would not cover you for cancelling due to COVID-19 as cancellation due to COVID-19 is now a known risk
3. Contracts for vendors and events your association is holding, must include a provision allowing you to cancel for any reason now, and how those who have paid will receive credit back for deposits or rentals. They should also make it very clear; you are not responsible for any sorts of lost revenue or sales or promotion by you cancelling the event (your lawyer should be consulted)
4. Land/facility rental contracts: if the event is cancelled it should be made clear in the contract if there will be any monetary exchange between you and the 3rd party involved if the event is cancelled at anytime up to and including the event date.

SPONSORS

1. It is important to contact your sponsors and check to see how they, their family, their employees and their business are doing. Ask what you can do for them – many of them may be closed or severely affected by the government directives. They need to know that you value them for their past sponsorship - now may not be the time to ask for money. Keep them informed – it’s far better for them to hear directly from you if you must change or cancel your event or Fair
2. Build up your sponsors, even if you don’t have a fair this year. Share their posts or promote activities they are doing in your community. Click [HERE](#) Kim Shippey’s April 15th presentation on our website for some other suggestions on this.
3. Reputation: many of the businesses who have traditionally been Fair sponsors are experiencing significant financial duress during this time - is it was appropriate to be asking for sponsorship monies? It might give the wrong impression of the organization’s real purpose in promoting Agriculture. This will be an extremely touchy area as this pandemic continues on.
4. Remember your sponsors are probably financially stressed too. Perhaps rather than cutting their sponsorship completely, they can give a reduced amount to help your Fair survive until next year. Perhaps they may have to defer until next year – always make sure your conversations end on a positive note - if they are not able to support your fair financially this year, perhaps they will be able to next year.



5. Discuss with your sponsors their expectations for their donation if your Fair or event does not proceed or does not proceed in the format that they are expecting. Full refunds? Credit to 2021 event in the same area? Ensure you have written contracts to protect them and your Agricultural Society. Any money collected must be used for its purpose and no other or a possible directors' lawsuit could ensue unless you have written permission to use it otherwise.



FINANCES

1. Create different budget scenarios for your Fair or event and determine the financial viability of each option
2. Best case if your fair goes ahead – attendance, attractions, exhibits and livestock shows, etc. - expectations are close to an average year
 - a. Note: If your event is going ahead, prepare your budgets for extra bathrooms, wash stations, medical information, signage and supplies.
2. Worst case if your fair goes ahead – a) attendance, attractions, exhibits and livestock shows, etc. are down significantly **OR** b) government cancels all attractions shortly before your Fair opens and you have no gate receipts but all the expenses
3. Fair is cancelled – Income and Expenses i.e. a) what expenses will not occur, b) what expenses will be incurred because of cancellation i.e. lost deposits, c) penalties for cancelling, d) what expenses are ongoing - insurance, hydro, e) what income will be lost – gate receipts, sponsorships, etc.
4. What will it cost to cancel your fair or event at the last minute as opposed to giving ample notice to your vendors, entertainers, midway, exhibitors, etc.?
5. Finances – carefully review your budgets Are there items that can be reduced or cut for this year to save funds? Different ways to fundraise?

INSURANCE

Check the presentation by Shawn LaPalm on April 29th – it is available on the OAAS website – there is some excellent information related to insurance and other issues you should consider - [Shawn LaPalm's Presentation CLICK HERE](#)

1. Consult your insurance broker to verify what coverage you have, and does it adequately cover you if you cancel or if your fair goes ahead
 - Do you have any coverage that will help cover financial losses because of COVID-19?
 - Ensure that you have 'Directors' and Officers' insurance coverage
 - If you have to cancel events or even your Fair – is there Insurance coverage that may not be required for this year? Keep in mind that most of your coverage will be required whether or not your fair/event is held.
 - If you are able to cancel some coverage due to events not being held – ENSURE that you set a date to reactivate the coverage for the 2021 season.

STAY INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY – ESPECIALLY IF YOU DON'T HOLD A FAIR THIS YEAR

1. Keep information and dates current
 - Post upcoming events for your Agricultural Society and information on next year's Fair

- add recipes; crafts; Ag education info; etc.
 - Link to other community events
2. Stay involved in your community - keep your Agricultural Society/Fair name on peoples' radar and to show you are community minded and could help with community relationships when COVID-19 is over
- Sponsor or help with other community activities i.e. Food Bank drive
 - Providing grounds or buildings for testing facilities or bunkhouses.
 - Offering to make deliveries for community groups or businesses.
 - Putting up a sign thanking front line workers and first responders.
 - Use your imagination!

WORK ON PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR'S FAIR

1. Work on projects that you have not had time to do i.e. review and update policies, or prize list books. Building and ground repairs or maintenance
2. During physical distancing, everyone is very involved with baking, growing gardens, sewing, and other crafts while self-isolating – take advantage of that and work to encourage new exhibitors to enter multiple classes at your 2021 Fair
3. Work to encourage new volunteers for your Agricultural Society – while people are self-isolating, many are volunteering in their communities – maybe for the first time – encourage them to join your Agricultural Society
4. Think of ways to promote that it is safe to attend your fair and activities i.e. plan and advertise that extra hand washing facilities will be available, better laid out fairgrounds to encourage physical distancing
 - Should wearing masks during the fair be promoted?
 - Perhaps pick an approved pattern and have a best decorated mask - different categories?

“#FairsAreResilient”

