



# NEWS

**From the North American  
International Livestock Exposition**  
Kentucky Exposition Center - Louisville, Kentucky

## **2008 Marks 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary For North American International Livestock Exposition**

September, 2008 ... When the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) opens its doors in November, livestock entries and their owners will take part in what promises to be one of the most prestigious shows ever. A total of forty-seven dairy, sheep and beef cattle association open shows will be held in 2008. Add to these the junior shows, the market animal shows, the American Quarter Horse Association sanctioned show, the draft horse show, the mule and donkey show, the Boer goat show and the llama and alpaca events, and the number of activities at the big expo rises to more than 120 separate events during the two week run.

Many major livestock industry shows are produced by non-profit organizations set up specifically for the purpose of conducting the event. The NAILE's structure is different. It is produced by the Commonwealth of Kentucky under the direction of the Kentucky State Fair Board. The Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) in Louisville, KY is its permanent home. A small staff performs the expo's day-to-day administrative tasks and a legion of volunteers from across the nation performs a myriad of other duties. A look back to the expo's founding reveals a unique sequence of events that led to the establishment of the world's largest purebred livestock show.

### **The Founding**

Sometime in 1971 then-Kentucky Governor Wendell H. Ford asked the Kentucky State Fair Board to look into producing a major livestock exposition. It is said that Governor Ford acted at the request of several Kentucky livestock breeders who felt that the time was right for a major event in the region. Some of the first correspondence found in expo archives is dated September of that year.

Don L. Johnson, Kentucky State Fair Board executive director, asked Lonnie Tomes to prepare a preliminary budget for a "major" livestock show. Johnson turned to Tomes, a KFEC employee, because of his unique background. A Kentucky native, Tomes' career had included ten years at the Union Stock Yard Co., Montgomery, AL and a second decade in management at Louisville's Bourbon Stock Yard Co. Bourbon had long produced important regional market shows and Tomes knew the value and the challenges of producing such events.

By the end of December 1972, Tomes had completed not only his budget, but a feasibility study. It revealed, "...in Dairy, Swine and Sheep Divisions, we do not have the interest and backing to include them at this time in a Major Livestock Show. The Beef Division indicates a strong interest and desire to participate."

The first North American Livestock Exposition was produced by two Kentucky government agencies...the Kentucky State Fair Board (the entity operating the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, as it was then known) and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. In 1973, Harold Workman, who was the beef and swine show supervisor in the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Division of Shows and Fairs, was appointed the expo's General Manager.

Those serving on the founding Executive Committee represent a mixture of the two state organizations and of the NAILE's volunteer ranks:

Governor Wendell H. Ford, Ex-Officio Chairman

Honorable Wendell Butler, Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture, Chairman

Barney Hornback, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Vice Chairman

Harold Workman, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Secretary-Manager

Jack Ragsdale, Manager, Sutherland Farms, Chairman, Advisory Committee

Lonnie Tomes, Kentucky Fair & Expo Center, Chairman, Consultant Committee

Fred Troutman, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Chairman, Publicity Committee

The show attracted an impressive list of volunteers from the livestock industry and Louisville area businesses who served on planning committees.

The first show took place November 17-23, 1974 at the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, Louisville, KY. It was billed as a "livestock expo" and had a logo featuring three species – beef cattle, sheep and swine – while the event actually featured only beef cattle shows. Inclusion of other species in the logo signaled that leaders planned future growth. Open and junior shows were conducted by five breeds: Angus, Charolais, Hereford, Polled Hereford and Shorthorn. Volunteers Garland Bastin and Bob Herbst, both of Lexington, KY, served as co-general beef superintendents. Bastin went on to become the NAILE general superintendent and served in that capacity for 27 years, until his death in 2000. Longtime NAILE volunteer James E. "Jimmie" Claycomb was named general superintendent in 2001. Bill Glover, Ridgely, TN, was the first official show photographer and he served through the mid-1990s in that role for the beef division. Jack Ragsdale was named chairman of the Beef Cattle Advisory Committee and went on to also serve as the NAILE Executive Committee chairman as well.

The American Angus Association and the American Polled Hereford Association held their annual meetings in conjunction with the North American. The first expo was also the site of the 1974 National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest. This was the first time the contest was held outside of Chicago's giant livestock expo – the International Livestock Exposition. A small commercial exhibits section debuted in 1974.

A pre-event press release from November 1974 announced “seven special sales” for Gelbvieh, Murray Grey, Charolais, Chianina, Simmental, Pinzgauer and the National Polled Hereford Sale. The first expo had 1,742 entries, including those in the Junior Steer Show and the Pen-Of-Five Feeder Calf Show.

While the first North American could not be deemed a financial success, the decision was made to continue due to high demand within the industry.

### **The Livestock Expo’s Growth**

The second expo opened with a second division – sheep. Twelve breeds brought 1,443 entries. Robert Hall, a Suffolk breeder from Lexington, KY, volunteered to be chairman of the Sheep Division Advisory Committee, a post he still holds. 1975 was also the year the Kentucky Department of Agriculture introduced its international visitor’s center. Today the center routinely hosts guests from more than 20 countries.

In 1977, the North American grew again with the addition of the Dairy Cattle Division. The American Jersey Cattle Club threw their support to the North American and brought their All American show series, along with the Jersey Jug Futurity, to the Kentucky Fair & Expo Center. Lewis Porter was the first chairman of the Dairy Division Advisory Committee. Joey Pendleton, a Jersey breeder and native of Hopkinsville, KY, became chairman of the Dairy Division Advisory Committee in 1978 and continues to serve in that capacity. The first dairy show opened with five breeds – Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Holstein and Jersey – and 2,364 entries.

1977 was also the first year for the Swine Division which consisted of a market show. Dr. Mack Whiteker, University of Kentucky extension swine specialist, Lexington, KY, agreed to head up the Swine Division Advisory Committee. He and swine show superintendent Dr. Dennis Liptrap worked together to oversee the hog contest. At Dr. Whiteker’s passing in 2006, Dr. Liptrap assumed the chairmanship of the Swine Committee. 1977 was the first year the expo spanned a two-week period.

The NAILE Quarter Horse Show began in 1978 under the guidance of Roger Ruetenik. This American Quarter Horse Association sanctioned event has grown to be one of the top shows in the nation. The Equine Advisory Committee chairman is Dr. James Rudolph.

Draft horses were added in 1983, and the dairy goat show was founded in 1988. The llama & alpaca show debuted in 1992. It was followed in 2000 by the Boer goat show and a junior meat goat show in 2006. 2007 was the first year for the mule and donkey show, bringing the NAILE to a total of ten livestock divisions.

In 1996 the Expo moved into the digital age by launching a website. Entries were accepted on the site starting in 2002. A few short years later in 2005, shows held in Freedom Hall were video streamed live from the website home page, and both national and international viewership soared. More than 46,000 users from around the world logged on that year to watch the dairy cattle and beef cattle competitions. Cameras were added to the sheep division show ring in 2006 and the website audience continues to grow.

To help ensure the event's overall financial stability, an entertainment feature that would attract both industry and metropolitan patrons was added. In 1979, the North American Championship Rodeo performed for the first time in Freedom Hall. The rodeo production was the result of Workman's negotiations with the then-fledgling Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) Circuit System. The Great Lakes Circuit finals rodeo has grown to rank among the top ten rodeos in terms of rodeo purse. More than \$80,000 is paid out to the champion cowboys.

### **The Administration Evolves**

The years of growth in shows, entries and prestige at the North American were not without some difficulties. In 1978, the North American Livestock Exposition was renamed the North American *International* Livestock Exposition. Some felt the NALE was on sound footing and did not need a link to Chicago's defunct International Livestock Exposition. The NALE was founded before the International closed in 1975. Others felt the Louisville show was natural heir to continue the great International's livestock traditions. With the new name came a new NAILE logo that featured five species -- beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, sheep and horses. That logo is still in use today.

In April 1984, the Kentucky General Assembly removed the expo from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and placed it under the jurisdiction of the State Fair Board. Workman became a KFEC/State Fair Board employee, serving as Director of Expositions, then as Vice President of Expositions and Operations and today as Kentucky State Fair Board President and Chief Executive Officer.

Until 1980, Workman was the NAILE's only full-time employee. By 1985, there were six state employees working year around on the exposition, including NAILE assistant manager David Snider who joined the staff in 1980. Jeffrey Zinner was named the NAILE assistant manager in 2006 following Snider's retirement. Today, operation of the NAILE is overseen by the KEC Director of Expositions, Corinne Fetter. Workman maintains his position at the helm of the giant exposition while fulfilling his primary duties as president of the Kentucky State Fair Board. His management role includes overseeing operations of the KEC and Kentucky International Convention Center facilities.

### **Secrets to Success**

Nearly anyone who shows at the NAILE can reveal the expo's "secrets to success". Everyone agrees that the Kentucky Exposition Center is the finest facility of its kind in the nation. It was originally designed to accommodate the Kentucky State Fair and its livestock show but grew to fit the needs of the NAILE. With the North Wing expansion completed, the facility is incomparable for indoor livestock events. In 2007 the name of the complex was changed from

Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center to Kentucky Exposition Center. The KEC boasts 1.2 million square feet of climate-controlled exhibit space on one level. Another strategic edge is Louisville's location. The city is within easy interstate driving distance of a large portion of the Midwest and all of the Northeast and South. The NAILE's third advantage is the quality of its management and the consistency of its hospitality.

This third advantage is unique and very important to the show's success. The spirit of accommodation and hospitality was set from the time Workman took the expo's reins. This spirit was defined in a story told by the late Ed Bible. At one of the early expositions, Bible was working for the Polled Hereford magazine and was attempting to take photos at the breed's NAILE sale. He was having difficulty getting his shot. Workman happened along and noticed Bible's consternation. Within moments, Workman had called for a forklift. Bible and his camera were raised above the crowd and the ideal, action images were captured. Bible cited this example of NAILE hospitality and pointed out that at any other show in the country, no one in management would have even noticed his predicament, much less come to his assistance.

This spirit of cooperation is found not only with NAILE staff, but throughout the ranks of the hundreds of volunteers who come to Louisville every year, produce their part of the event and go back to their regular work assignments somewhere in the United States. Many of those who give so freely of their time and expertise have been doing so for years. While the small full-time state staff attends to day-to-day administrative matters, in November most on-site duties are performed by legions of volunteers. Everyone takes ownership of their part in making the exposition a success.

### **The Present**

This year the NAILE will host more national shows and livestock entries than ever before. Over \$700,000 in premiums and awards will go home with exhibitors from across the nation. Hundreds of dedicated volunteers will once again work the show and go home knowing they played a part in making the "World's Largest Purebred Livestock Expo" an ongoing success.

The show will also host several youth livestock judging contests including the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest, the National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest, the Junior Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest, the Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup, the NAILE Dairy Judging Contest, the National 4-H Poultry & Egg Conference and others.

As the North American International sets the stage for future growth, it has also taken a bow on the world's agricultural stage. For years visitors from many foreign countries have traveled to the NAILE in search of livestock excellence. The shows, sales, judging quality and cooperative spirit have coalesced to form a unique event, one that now has both domestic and international influence in livestock agriculture. The NAILE, as an all-breed, purebred livestock exposition has become an incomparable showcase for excellence.

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