A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL
LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION

In June of 1973, Governor Wendell Ford announced the formation of a major livestock show for the state of Kentucky to be held at the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center. Governor Ford pledged $50,000.00 to support a Beef Show and related activities, such as Livestock Judging Contests, plus an additional $25,000.00 for rental of the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center.

This major livestock show was placed under the direction of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and a committee was formed to develop the show. Agriculture Commissioner Wendell Butler, by virtue of his office, served as Chairman of this committee. Barney Hornback, Director of the Division of Shows and Fairs, was appointed Vice Chairman; and Harold Workman was appointed to the committee and named Manager.

Three committees were set up immediately: a Beef Advisory Committee, a Publicity Committee and a Consultant Committee.

The Angus, Hereford, Polled Hereford, Shorthorn and Charolais Associations of Kentucky each recommended two persons to serve on the Beef Advisory Committee, while each of the national breed associations recommended one name to serve on this committee.

The Publicity Committee was formed of farm editors and broadcasters from various locations in Kentucky, members of the Department of Public Information Staff, and a member of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Division of Promotion.

The Consultant Committee was formed of people representing industries related to the show, such as the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, the Governor’s Council on Agriculture, the Kentucky Livestock Improvement Association, the Louisville Convention Bureau, the Kentucky Beef Cattle Association and the University of Kentucky.

Each of these three committees elected a Chairman who would sit on the Executive Committee along with the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Director of the Division of Shows and Fairs and the Manager of the show.

Various names were presented to the Executive Committee and finally, in 1974, the name North American Livestock Exposition was selected, and November was set as the month for the Exposition.

The first Exposition hosted beef shows, beef sales, a 4-H Livestock Judging Contest, and Commercial Exhibits. There were approximately 2,100 head of beef cattle entered in the first North American.
In 1975, the second year for the NAILE, the Executive Committee wanted to expand the Show to include sheep and swine. A request was made of Governor Julian Carroll for an additional $30,000.00 to support these two new activities, as well as an additional $10,000.00 for the rental of the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, bringing the total to $35,000.00 for rental. This request was granted.

The Sheep Show was initiated in 1975, but the Swine Show had to be postponed. At this time, a Sheep Advisory Committee was appointed, with a Chairman elected. The Chairman also became a member of the Executive Committee.

The 1975 NAILE featured over 2,200 head of beef cattle and 1,500+ head of sheep, 4-H and Collegiate Livestock Judging Contests, Commercial Exhibits, beef cattle sales and a 4-Day Rodeo.

In 1976, the Rodeo was eliminated and a Junior College Livestock Judging Contest was added. Entries were considerably higher in 1976: 3,000+ head of sheep entered and 2,500+ head of cattle.

Even before the 1976 NAILE, plans were underway to expand again in 1977 with the addition of a major Dairy Show and a Swine Show. The show was also extended from one week to two weeks. Additional funds were requested of Governor Julian Carroll.

The Dairy Advisory Committee was appointed following the same guideline as the Beef Advisory Committee, with each of the five state dairy breed associations presenting one name. Advisory Committees were also appointed for the Swine Show and the Quarter Horse Show. A Chairman was elected for each of these three committees, and this chairman was added to the Executive Committee, bringing the total membership of the Executive Committee to eleven members.

The North American has shown remarkable growth through the years. From a “beef cattle only” event in 1974 with around 2,000 entries, the show has grown to include nine divisions and more than 20,000 entries. Quarter Horses were added in 1978; Draft Horses in 1983; Dairy Goats in 1988; Llamas and Stockdogs in 1992. Total premiums and awards for all events exceed $500,000 and exhibitors represent 47 states and Canada. More than 200,000 people attend the NAILE each year.