

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Considerations for Spectator Safety during Sporting Events



Over 15 million people attend sporting events annually. Spectator deaths have occurred in some of these cases, most commonly in hockey and baseball. In the case of livestock shows, horse shows and rodeos, there are injuries, but to my knowledge no death has occurred. Data is available on death and injuries relating to events involving horses, motorcycles, etc. In all of these events, head injuries are the most prevalent nationwide. I haven't been able to find statistics for events in Mississippi. But, in our 4-H area, there hasn't been an injury reported in many years. At least, I haven't seen one on any of the Workers' Comp. reports that I see.

In the few 4-H events that I have attended, security and safety personnel are few and far between. I think that it would be a beneficial idea to discuss these issues and consider formulating a pre-show inspection form for checking the spectator facilities, show preparation areas and overall security for the venue. If the county sheriff or city police could dispatch officers for the event to patrol and oversee the crowd control and general security it would be a valuable tool for the event staff.

Another possibility would be if the 4-H staff who is hosting the event could appoint 1 or 2 people to perform the pre-show inspection with a form furnished for pertinent items to check-off and 1 of these folks to free-lance around the arena during events to check and monitor the spectator behavior (as a goodwill ambassador for the event). In the event of a problem, he could ask for help to mitigate the situation. It would be pretty easy to prepare a form relating to animal, participant, and spectator safety precautions. I have discussed the above with a few 4-H folks, and to their knowledge there are no policies or programs in place for this.

Following are some categories with items that could be included in a checklist:

Spectator Safety

- Are steps, aisles and walkways clear of debris and in acceptable condition?
- Is the spectator seating areas clean with no faulty seating?
- Are the spectator areas a safe distance from the participant show area with security barriers from alarmed animals?
- Is there signage posted for directions for concession and restroom areas?
- Is there signage posted with directions for first aid and/or medical service areas?
- Is there signage releasing MSU-ES of responsibility from personal or event liabilities from spectators?
- Are there signage alerting spectators on policies for cameras, video cameras or other electronic devices? (If there is a policy)
- Is there signage relating to pets in spectator or participant areas? (If there is a policy)
- Is there signage identifying the prohibition of drugs and alcohol anywhere on the arena properties?

Animal Safety

- ✓ Are the stalls clean and railings of obstructing or protrusions?
- ✓ Are the pens, gates fences in good condition?

- ✓ Do all doors and gates work properly?
- ✓ Is the grooming chute in good repair with a non-slip pad?
- ✓ Is the electrical wiring in good condition with no abrasion or exposed wiring?
- ✓ Is there adequate lighting in the prep and show areas?
- ✓ Are there at least 2 exits to the building?
- ✓ Are GFCIs installed in wet or moist areas?
- ✓ Are the animals immunized as required by the event?
- ✓ Are the participating animals immunized according to the event regulations?
- ✓ Are the animal medicines and drugs kept in a secure location and stored in their original containers?
- ✓ Is the personal protective equipment such as safety glasses, nitrile/rubber gloves available on sight?

General Safety Tips

- Spectators are prohibited from climbing over gates, fences or pens.
- ATVs, UTVs, and other types of motorized vehicles should not be in operation during events, and at no time should they be allowed in the event preparation area or show areas.
- Abusive and vulgar language is prohibited on all areas of the event property.
- Alcohol or drugs are not allowed anywhere on the property.
- In addition to signage, vocal announcements should be made informing all participants and spectators of the respective policies regarding university event policies and non-liability policies, directions to restrooms, concession areas, exits and first aid/medical service to reduce the potential for confusion and to aid in the protection from "harm's way."
- Physical violence won't be tolerated. Violators will be turned over to the police authorities.
- The event committee should identify all 4-H personnel with CPR/1st Aid certification.
- Event Director should work to secure the services of local police or sheriff's personnel to handle security and safety, if and when it is possible,
- Event Director should make contact with local ambulatory services to possibly have an ambulance and EMTs on sight for the event.
- Extension cords should be used for temporary help only.

According to reports and observations, we experience a minimum amount of problems, altercations or disruptions at our 4-H events. In some of our counties, the local Extension staff does the planning, scheduling and controlling the activities for the arena. In the larger county areas, a staff is employed by the respective county that performs most of these functions. I was asked to look into policies for safety and security and explore ideas for consideration for the areas that I discussed above.

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