



157th HERITAGE BANK
TOOWOOMBA ROYAL SHOW REPORT
25TH – 27TH MARCH 2022



After the COVID induced turmoil of the past two years it was hoped, that with vaccination status exceeding 90%, restrictions would be eased, public confidence would be high, and there would be a significant desire to embrace Agricultural shows once again.

Unfortunately, with the inconsistent rules and messaging in relation to events held on showgrounds, this year's show was certainly more difficult and uncertain than when dealing with the very strict conditions of 2021.

Only vaccinated patrons, competitors and exhibitors could participate at the show although these same people could attend the showgrounds two weeks prior for an equestrian event without the need to be vaccinated. The entire show movement spent countless hours, talking to the media, meeting with politicians trying to get the rules changed to no avail. This caused significant concern to our exhibitors, competitors, patrons, staff, volunteers and stewards.

In fact, as the show got closer, there was a major increase in cancellations from our commercial site holders who had expected mandates to be lifted.

We worked very closely with Queensland Health in the lead up to the show and through both our Showday competitor entry platform and LUP ticketing platform, we were able to ensure all COVID requirements were met.

In addition, we were able to reactivate our COVID protocols from 2021 covering signage, cleaning, physical distancing and sanitising requirements.

As the majority of shows on the Darling Downs were cancelled or postponed due to the uncertainty and substantial cost increases, the Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland committee continued to move forward and lead the way to ensure the show went ahead and give some much needed confidence to the shows that followed us, as well as the many competitors, exhibitors, itinerant traders, caterers and members of the Showmen's Guild who had such a difficult time over the past two years.

It was very difficult to gauge what our attendance would be. Just under 28000 patrons attended the show, a decline of 1500 or about 5% on 2021, with considering it rained everyday and the covid mandate restrictions was a satisfactory result.



The Committee focused on 5 main objectives for the show.

- Provide a conduit for competition ensuring that a blue ribbon at the Heritage Bank Toowoomba Royal Show was the pinnacle in showcasing the best the region has to offer.
- Educate young people about the importance of agriculture through our program of static and interactive, activities and events.
- Entertain all our patrons with a range of events ensuring they catered for all ages.
- Ensuring that we not just met but exceeded all our COVID safe requirements providing a safe environment for all our patrons, competitors, exhibitors, members, contractors, volunteers and staff.
- Provide confidence and the best possible COVID safe business practices for all other shows in Queensland.



COMPETITION

Over 160 years ago, pastoralists from across the region gathered to compete to find the best bull, cow, horse, pigs, crops and produce. Their aim was not to win a blue ribbon but to improve the livestock and crops of the colony. This tradition continues today.

Dairy cattle were judged early in the week before the main show commenced.

Horses, back to a full program with over 2500 entries, arrived on Tuesday with competition commencing on Wednesday and concluding on Saturday evening.

Stud Beef Cattle, with over 200 entries were judged on Friday and Saturday. Speckle Parks were the feature breed with over 70 entries. Led Steers were judged on Sunday.



Show Dogs were judged on Thursday, Friday and Saturday while Sheep Dog trials were judged from Friday to Sunday.

Other livestock that were judged included Meat Sheep, Goats, Poultry, Alpaca and Pigs and all were on display for the 3 days.



After a number of pavilion sections were cancelled last year, all were back this year with the exception of Woodcraft which had a display at the Toowoomba & District Woodcrafters Club House.

Of course, no show is complete without the traditional Woodchop and Chainsaw events which were held over the 3 days and again included both the Queensland and World Title Woodchop Events.



EDUCATION

Education continues to be the cornerstone of what we are aiming to achieve as an Agricultural Society. Educating, particularly young people, is part of our DNA. We continued to do this across a number of platforms.

Costa returned to the show. His passion for gardening, sustainable agriculture, educating and engaging with young people and promoting the show movement is incredible and so infectious. You simply cannot be buoyed by Costa's excitement. He is such a strong advocate for what we are trying to achieve.

Similarly, Paul West returned. He is a real friend of the RAS and a great spokesperson for the show movement. To celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the QCWA we arranged a scone bake off each day. Although Paul tried his best, he was no match for the QCWA ladies. To recognise the milestone, the QCWA, for the first time offered scones jam and cream, almost 2000 were sold during the show.

After the success of our AG Long Lunch from last year, which won the Award for the Best Local Event at an Agricultural Show, we were again able to stage the event with the support of Heritage Bank. Local school children joined industry representatives to share a meal and learn about where their food comes from. We were fortunate that the Minister for Agriculture Mr Mark Furner was able to attend.

In addition, our very popular animal nursery, working dairy, historical machinery displays, and Little Hands on The Farm programs continued to engage, entertain and educate our patrons and drew and significant crowds.



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

Once in the door, pay no more has been our mantra for many years and the 2022 Heritage Bank Toowoomba Royal Show was no exception. There were over 50 things to see and do that did not cost our patrons a cent once they entered the gates.

Bluey and Bingo really stole the show. To see the enormous crowds on Friday and Saturday were fantastic and all the Meet and Greets over the 3 days were fully subscribed. It was great to be able to bring Bluey and Bingo to Toowoomba families. The crowd in the grandstand for their Saturday night show was the largest in over a decade.



After the success of last year, we welcomed back Dinkum Dinosaurs, Lukes Reptile Kingdom and Eroni's Circus. These acts joined our staples of Pig Racing, Dock Dogs, Dog High Jumping and Jet Pack & Jetski Superheroes on the lake.

Bull riding, Bluey and Bingo, Dancing in Ya Seats, 2 Fireworks Shows, Vintage Sprint Cars, Horse Archery, Freestyle Motocross and The Globe of Death Motorcycle Stunt show filled the arena each night.



STAY COVID SAFE

As mentioned earlier, this year was so much more difficult than 2021 due to the uncertainty and confusion around COVID mandates.

The Society was very diligent in relation to signage, cleaning and ticket registrations.

All amenities were cleaned at a minimum of every hour with 3 cleaning crews permanently on site and there were more than 20 hand sanitising stations located around the grounds.

Signage was located at every entrance to the grounds and also at the Pavilion and Glenvale Room.

Random scanning, to confirm double vaccination status as per the directive from Queensland Health was conducted at all entrances.

With so many shows cancelled or postponed and the larger shows following Toowoomba, it was vitally important that the RASQ conducted a COVID safe event, whilst adhering to the mandates as best as possible without causing undue concerns for patrons, competitors and exhibitors. We were aware that confidence needed to be restored in Agricultural shows and we had a very important role in providing that security moving forward.

2023 SHOW

In 2022 we changed the show days from a Thursday to Saturday format to a Friday to Sunday format. This was driven by the capacity limits at the time to try and spread the crowds over the three days.

The results for the Friday public holiday and Saturday were excellent. We were disappointed with the attendance on Sunday as were a number of the exhibitors, caterers and showmen.

This year we increased the amount of family entertainment on offer particularly with the Bluey and Bingo show, and although we did see an increase in attendance on Sunday it was not as significant as hoped.

The committee is currently looking at moving back to a Thursday to Saturday show with the show opening at approximately 2pm on Thursday and Friday remaining the show holiday.

This will give the site holders and showmen three nights of trading and the public three nightly entertainment shows.

A survey will be sent out in the coming weeks, but already the Showmen have thrown their support behind the concept.

We will look at redesigning the Founders Pavilion to include more handmade crafts, entertainment and education workshops & displays. The idea will be for patrons to be able to spend more time in the pavilion engaging with our exhibitors and competitors.

All our competitions will be held on the main show days. For the last couple of years both the Dairy Cattle & Show dogs have started prior to the show getting under way. Both of these competitions will be held during the show.

Our Capital Works Program will continue with more roadways replaced prior to the show. Additionally, we were fortunate to receive a Federal Government Grant to replace existing lighting while adding more to areas not currently covered with adequate lighting.

We will continue to look at opportunities to engage with children to educate them about where their food and fibre comes from. It is so important that the RASQ continues to have this dialogue about how we can deliver this better. It is hoped we can activate other areas of the grounds to achieve this.

Next years show is planned to start at 2pm Thursday 30th March through to Saturday 1st April with Friday 31st March being the gazetted Show Holiday.

THANK YOU

Over 200 Volunteers assisted during the show. Without their dedication and effort, the show could not function and I thank them for that.

Additionally, a number of service clubs including Rotary, Girl Guides, QCWA and Scouts assisted with gates, traffic control, cleaning, parking and bars. It is terrific that we are able to offer these organisations the opportunity to generate much needed funds.



In addition, almost 300 sponsors contribute to what is our region's largest community event through the donation of cash, product and prizes. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all our sponsors for the great contribution they make.

The history of the show is the promotion of Agricultural excellence through competition. I would like to thank and congratulate all our exhibitors. Without them we would not have a show. In particular, this year was very difficult with the floods across Queensland and New South Wales. Some of the stories from our competitors are heartbreaking and we hope they get back on their feet as soon as possible.

The Showmen have had a horrendous time since COVID hit, and we certainly feel for them. This year our committee made the decision very early to continue to move forward with the show whilst so many cancelled or postponed. In hindsight it would have been a lot easier to hoist the white flag, but we felt we had an obligation to the showmen, competitors, service groups and exhibitors to push on. We are so glad that we did.

I would also like to thank our committee. They are all volunteers and contribute so much. Again, without them the show would not go on. They believe in the show movement and the economic benefits delivered to our region.

The RASQ was committed to staging an entertaining, educational, competitive and COVID safe event for the Darling Downs community. Through the support of the community, our many sponsors, site holders, competitors, committees, volunteers, media and showmen we were able to achieve this.

Thank you for joining us on this amazing, and exciting journey. We look forward to your continued involvement and support.