

Febraury 9, 2026

TO: County Fair Secretaries and County Fair Queen Contest Coordinator

FROM: Amanda Cook, Iowa State Fair Queen Competition Coordinator

Tonya Cook, Special Events & Interim Events Director, Iowa State Fair

Preparations are underway for the 2026 Iowa State Fair Queen Competition. This year, the competition will be held from Tuesday, August 11th, through Saturday, August 15th. After numerous appearances at the State Fairgrounds and in the community, several days of judging, and memorable competition activities, we will crown our 2026 Queen on Saturday, August 15th, at the Fair. We hope your county will send a representative this year.

Enclosed are the competition rules and regulations, and general information that will benefit you and your contestants.

County Payment is now available online. Attached are instructions for making the payment online. This will streamline the process for everyone. This is the second year of this change. ALL counties need to go through this process. IF YOU HAVE TO MAIL A CHECK, THERE IS A CODE YOU CAN RECEIVE FROM ME TO BYPASS PAYMENT. CALL TONYA TO GET THE CODE.

One important thing that we ask for your help with is that we've seen an increasing number of requests by the girls for changes in their judging schedule. It's important that your county fair queen fully commits to this competition. They should be asked during your county judging if they can fully commit to the responsibilities of being the county fair queen, including full participation in the Iowa State Fair Queen Competition. Approval of schedule change requests may be limited. The Iowa State Fair Queen Competition can be a very meaningful experience for your queen if she fully participates.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding the competition, please get in touch with one of us.

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QUEEN CONTESTANT PACKING SUGGESTIONS

- ONE Casual Wear outfit per day
 - Suggestions include dresses, rompers, jumpsuits, or dressy shorts
 - Includes the outfit you will wear on stage on Thursday and Friday
 - Includes the outfit you will wear for a casual interview on Saturday
 - Includes the outfit you will wear for the Iowa State Fair Parade on Wednesday
- Casual Wear Outfit to volunteer at the fair – Please consider wearing shorts or a romper
- One Business Attire outfit for an individual interview
- One Formal Gown - Consider a prom dress or floor-length gown (Keep in mind you must walk up and down steps to the stage)
- Casual clothes for free time at the hotel
- Swimsuit
- Workout clothes for optional morning workouts
- Lightweight jacket or sweatshirt
- Pajamas
- Comfortable shoes to walk around the fair in (with casual outfits)
- Small purse to carry at the fairgrounds
- Band-aids for feet after walking at the fair
- Extra spending money for the fair
- Toiletries (toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc.)
- Make-up
- Jewelry (nothing too expensive)
- Snacks for your room
- Bobby pins if needed for your crown
- Sunglasses
- Cell phone and charger
- Power strip (four girls will be getting ready in one hotel room)
- Water bottle to use at the hotel

There is **limited** closet space so please remind your queen to pack as light as possible.

Please Note: The Iowa State Fair is not responsible for valuables lost or stolen. Candidates should keep their room locked and key with them.

IOWA STATE FAIR QUEEN COMPETITION

General Information

Housing Accommodations:

Housing accommodations are offered for queen candidates only (four contestants per room). The Iowa State Fair provides chaperones and staff, queens are not allowed to bring anyone to stay with them.

Because our time is limited and space is tight, visitors are not allowed at the hotel during the competition. However, family and friends are welcome to attend the queen introductions on Thursday and Friday afternoons at the Fair. Friends and family are encouraged to attend the crowning on the Anne and Bill Riley Stage, on Saturday, August 15th, at 7:00 pm. In addition, queens will have a few hours of free time at the fair on Thursday and Friday evenings.

Queens are not allowed to leave the hotel during the entire competition unless they have signed a release form. Travel must be approved by the coordinator and the queen's guardians.

Transportation:

Transportation will be provided from the hotel to the fairgrounds and back each day except after the crowning. At this time, contestants can return to the hotel with family/friends to pick up their belongings. However, the contestant's belongings can be picked up at the hotel before the coronation. All contestants are to check out by 2:00 p.m. (tentative) on Saturday 9th but will remain with the chaperones until after the coronation.

Meals:

The Iowa State Fair provides meals for the contestants. A variety of snacks will be provided. Any additional items, such as food purchased at the fair, are at the queen's expense. If there are any health concerns or food requirements, the coordinator must be contacted before check-in.

Clothing:

Except during free time at the hotel, the queen's crown and sash, which will be provided to your county's contest chairperson by the Iowa State Fair, is to be worn throughout the entire contest. Candidates will wear formal wear for part of the judging and the crowning (prom dresses are acceptable). The same formal can be worn each time. Candidates will also need one business attire outfit, and a few casual wear outfits such as dresses, rompers, jumpsuits, or dressy shorts. Candidates may want to bring a variety of different casual wear outfits, as they will be wearing these outfits at the fair and for judging.

Workshops:

The tentative schedule shows several workshops and volunteer experiences throughout the week. Queens are strongly encouraged to attend each workshop if they are not scheduled for an interview or volunteer experience at that time. Several talented people donate their time and materials to make this event memorable.

In addition, a select few of the workshops may involve items or services that you have the option to purchase or tip for. For example, candidates may get a free facial, hair, or makeup appointment and then choose to tip the stylist. Purchases and tips are optional!

Please Note:

The judges often ask the same questions of various contestants, so please remind your candidates not to discuss individual interviews or group discussion questions with any other candidates. Judging results or judging forms are not released.

2026 Iowa State Fair Queen Competition Rules and Regulations

Note: Please forward these rules and regulations to your queen when selected.

1. Each contestant must be female and at least 16 years of age and not more than 21 years of age on Aug 13th, the first day of the 2026 Iowa State Fair.
2. Contestants must have never been married.
3. A county fair queen must reside in the county she represents or an adjoining county if most of her activities in the county she represents. If a fair represents more than one county, the winning contestant must reside in one of the participating counties.
4. Each contestant must be an active member of at least one service organization in her community such as a church group, Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA, etc. (Eligibility is not limited to 4-H or FFA membership.)
5. Each entrant in the State Fair Competition must be selected from a competitive queen contest at her county fair. If an Iowa fair does not have a contest, it may sanction another queen contest in their county as the "Official County Fair Queen Contest." The winner of this is then eligible to compete at the Iowa State Fair. Only contests sponsored by county fairs that are members of the Association of Iowa Fairs will be eligible to compete at the state level.
6. Only winners as indicated under Rule 5 are eligible to represent counties at the state pageant. In the event the county queen is unable to participate, alternates will be considered in order of selection.
7. No professional model (one who has had ongoing employment in which modeling was the primary part of the job) is eligible to compete in the state competition.
8. Any contestant who has competed at the Iowa State Fair Queen level of the competition may not compete again.
9. Any county fair queen selected after the 2025 Iowa State Fair and meeting the above qualifications is eligible for the 2026 competition
10. The Iowa State Fair will accept only one entry per county. Should there be more than one queen contest in the county, it will be the responsibility of the fairs concerned to hold an elimination contest. The only exception to this rule will be in those counties where more than one fair qualifies for membership with the Association of Iowa Fairs. In those cases, both fairs will be eligible to submit candidates for competition.

11. It is the responsibility of each contestant to plan transportation to and from Des Moines.
12. The county fair queens will be the guests of the Iowa State Fair Tuesday, August 11th, through the time of the crowning Saturday evening, August 15th, 2026.
13. The Iowa State Fair will provide a sash and crown for each county fair to award their queen at the county fair. This must be worn when she appears at the Iowa State Fair and is included in the \$450.00 entry fee. The entry fee for entries received after April 30 is \$500.00. Absolutely NO entries will be accepted after May 31! **Online payment for 2026 will only be accepted. The link has been attached to this email.**
14. County fairs are requested to select their candidates by competition in which personality, leadership, and beauty are judged.
15. A competent committee will select the “Iowa State Fair Queen”. Judging comments are not available to the contestants or county representatives. Judging will be based on the following:

Personality, Attitude, Appearance, and Awareness Leadership and Citizenship -
Contribution to Community, Overall Appearance, Charm, Poise
16. Each contestant should be prepared to appear in a variety of attire, such as business attire or a suit, evening attire, or casual wear.
17. The winner of the state competition will be crowned “2026 Iowa State Fair Queen.” The 2026 Queen will be required to remain at the Fairgrounds for the remaining time of the 2026 Fair.
18. The state competition winner must agree to appear for the Iowa State Fair Board in official capacities as requested throughout the year until her successor is crowned. This includes daily appearances at the 2026 Fair and the first three days at the 2027 Fair. The Iowa State Fair will help with food and transportation expenses for these appearances.
19. If the winner cannot reign until a new queen is crowned at the 2027 Fair, she must forfeit the title, and all awards associated with it to the first runner-up. She may then accept the title and all awards associated with it to the first runner-up. She may then accept the title and awards for the first runner-up.

20. The winning contestant at the Iowa State Fair must agree to accept no other queen titles nor endorse any commercial product as “Iowa State Fair Queen” for 12 months following the 2026 Iowa State Fair without the written permission of the Iowa State Fair Board.
21. The winning contestant will receive all the prizes at the time of the finals except the scholarships. The scholarships will be presented to her after the 2027 Iowa State Fair Queen is selected.
22. The reigning 2026 “Iowa State Fair Queen” is expected to conduct herself in a manner that reflects positively on herself, her family, and the Iowa State Fair. Should the reigning “Iowa State Fair Queen” become involved in any activity, including drug, alcohol, or tobacco-related offense that reflects negatively on herself, her family, or the Iowa State Fair, she may be required to forfeit her crown, title, and rights to the scholarship award to the first runner-up.
23. Should the 2026 “Iowa State Fair Queen” marry or become ineligible before the 2027 queen is crowned, she will forfeit her title, crown, and rights to the scholarship award for the first runner-up. Should the first runner-up marry or become ineligible, she will forfeit the title, crown, and rights to the scholarship to the second runner-up.
24. The Iowa State Fair Board reserves the right to change and interpret the foregoing rules and regulations at any time as may be deemed expedient.

2026 IOWA STATE FAIR QUEEN COMPETITION

Subject to change before the event

Tuesday

2:00 – 4:00 pm	Check-in at Prairie Meadows (1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona, IA 50009). Queen candidates can check into their room and turn in their pictures, questionnaire, permission form, and any additional information. Check-in will take place in the Event Center Entrance and chaperones will be there to assist.
4:30 pm	Ice Breakers and Orientation meeting (Queens ONLY)
6:00 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm	Stage Practice Workshop

Wednesday

7:30 am	Continental breakfast
8:00 am	Individual interviews begin (Business Attire)
8:30 am	Workout class/Workshops begin
11:30 am	Lunch
12:30 pm	Interviews continue
2:00 pm	Stage Practice Workshop
6:15 pm	Parade (Casual Outfit such as a sundress)
8:00 pm	Dinner

Thursday

6:30 am	Continental breakfast
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7:30 am	Healthiest State Initiative Walk at the Fairgrounds
7:30 am	Some queens volunteer on fairgrounds
8:00 am	Individual interviews (Business Attire)
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	Workshops begin
4:00 pm	Introduction of candidates on Knapp Stage (Casual Dress)
4:30 pm	Scavenger Hunt
5:00 pm	Dinner at the Fairgrounds
7:00 pm	Free time on the fairgrounds (partner up)
8:30 pm	Buses leave the fairgrounds
<u>Friday</u>	
7:00 am	Continental breakfast
7:30 am	Some queens volunteer on fairgrounds
9:00 am	Workout Class/Workshops begin
9:00 am	Group Interviews begin (Formal Wear)
10:30 am	Individual pictures start (Formal Wear)
11:45 am	Lunch
1:00 pm	Group picture taken (Formal Wear)
4:00 pm	Introduction of candidates on Knapp Stage (Casual Dress)
5:30 pm	Dinner and Dessert at the County Fair BBQ
7:00 pm	Giant Slide/Sky Glider rides

8:30 pm Buses leave the fairgrounds

9:00 pm Pool Party

Saturday

7:00 am Continental breakfast

7:30 am Some queens volunteer on fairgrounds

8:00 am Short individual interviews begin in **Casual Wear**

8:00 am Workshops begin

Noon Lunch

2:00 pm Must be checked out of hotel room. Family or friends may pick up your belongings.

7:00 pm Presentation of the queen candidates on the Bill Riley Stage, Crowning of the 2026 Iowa State Fair Queen and her court (Formal Wear)

Immediately after the crowning, all candidates are released to family/friends. We would appreciate all the candidates planning to have their belongings picked up at the hotel before 4:00 pm