



Photography

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVENTH

NEBRASKA STATE FAIR

August 28 – September 7, 2026

Grand Island, NE



Join the Photography Department in celebrating “It All Happens Here” at the 2026 Nebraska State Fair.

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New in 2026

- Division 5406 Class 612: Red, White, & Nebraska
- People’s Choice Voting ends Thursday, September 3rd at 5 pm

Important Dates

- Entry Deadline: Tuesday, August 11, at 11:59 pm
- Exhibit Delivery: Wednesday, August 19, 3 pm – 8 pm
Thursday, August 20, 8 am – 3 pm
- Exhibit Release: Monday, September 7, 6 pm – 8 pm. **Early Release is Prohibited.**
Tuesday, September 8, 8 am - noon

As an Open Class exhibitor you are an important part of what makes the Nebraska State Fair great. If you've appreciated your involvement and want to find other ways to support Competitive Exhibits, we hope you'll consider coming out to volunteer with us during the event! All volunteers get to pick what department they'd like to volunteer, they receive free gate admission for each shift worked and a complimentary official souvenir shirt. For more information or to register as a volunteer, please contact Haley Hewen at hhewen@statefair.org or visit www.statefairvolunteer.org.

Photography Department Divisions

- Divisions 5401&5402 contain classes for exhibitors that meet the Nebraska State Fair definition of Advanced Amateur.
- Divisions 5403&5404 contain classes for exhibitors that meet the Nebraska State Fair definition of Amateur.
- Division 5405 contains classes specifically for Youth ages 17 & under as of January 1st. Must have age on back.
- Division 5406 contains special classes that are open to Advanced Amateur, Amateur, and Youth.

Class Premiums and Overall Awards

The judge may, but is not required to, award a ribbon for the first five places in each class of all divisions. The ribbon colors and premiums are provided by the Nebraska State Fair for all divisions.

Place	Ribbon	Divisions 5406	Divisions 5401 5402	Divisions 5403- 5405
1	Blue	\$25	\$15	\$10
2	Red	\$16	\$12	\$8
3	White	\$12	\$9	\$6
4	Pink	\$8	\$6	\$4
5	Yellow			
Honorable Mention	Green			

The Nebraska State Fair also awards the following:

- Best of Division 5401-5406 – rosette and \$50
- Best of Show Advanced Amateur – rosette and \$150
- Best of Show Amateur - rosette and \$150
- People’s Choice Best of Show – rosette and \$25
- Best of County – rosette 1st place \$50; 2nd place \$25
- NEBRASKAland Magazine – rosette
- Nebraska Farmer – rosette
- Blue Ribbon Classic – rosette

The Nebraska Beekeepers Association will award a pound of honey to the best bee photograph and a rosette.

Conservation Blueprint LLC will award a rosette and \$20 to a photo of prairie restoration, pollinator habitat, or native wildflower.

Sweepstakes Sponsored by Grand Island Casino Resort

These are based on a point system. 1st place – 5 points, 2nd place – 3 points, and 3rd place – 1 point.

Best of Show – 15 points, Reserve Best of Show – 12 points, Best of Division 10 points, Reserve Best of Division 7 points.

Note: If an exhibitor wins for 2 consecutive years, they will be ineligible to win for the following 2 years.

1st place - \$300

2nd place - \$200

3rd place - \$100

The first-place winner will then go in for a people’s choice Overall Sweepstakes Winner receiving a plaque and their name engraved on a trophy that will be displayed each year during the fair. The voting will begin the final weekend of the fair after all static events are complete. It will be a google form that you will use an email address to submit a vote.

Department Rules

It’s the Exhibitor’s responsibility to be familiar with the [General Rules & Regulations](#) linked here which apply to all Nebraska State Fair open class departments of Competitive Exhibits and to the specific rules for each department.

Additional Rules Specific to the Photography Department are:

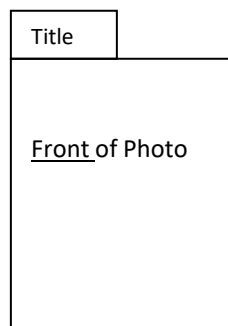
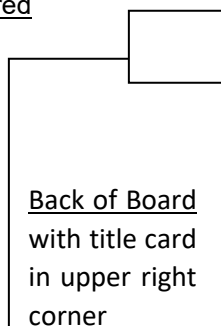
- Competition is limited to exhibitors who are Nebraska residents only.
- Submission of an entry form indicates the exhibitor’s acceptance of rules and certifies photographs as their own work. The exhibitor must have made the original exposure from which the print was made as well as any photo modifications of the original exposure.

- An exhibitor can only enter one entry per class and no more than 12 entries in total.
- The same photo or similar photo cannot be entered in multiple classes. Photos should be of entirely different subjects.
- Competition is limited to exhibitors who meet either the Amateur or Advanced Amateur categories. See details of these categories in the Judging Process and Criteria section.
- An exhibitor who meets the criteria of Advanced Amateur can enter only in Divisions 5401, 5402, and 5406. Entries from an Advanced Amateur will not be judged if entered in Amateur Divisions 5403 or 5404. An entry that uses advanced editing skills cannot be entered in Amateur classes and if entered will not be judged.
- Division 5405 is restricted for Youth (age 17 as of January 1st). Birth date must be listed on the entry form when entering and age restricted class and must be posted on the back of the photo.
- Youth may also enter in Division 5406 or in Divisions 5401-5404 provided they meet the Amateur or Advanced Amateur criteria associated with those divisions.
- Youth cannot enter the same photo in 4-H, FFA, and Open Class Photography.
- Photos having won ribbons in previous Nebraska State Fairs are not eligible to enter except for Division 5406 Class 606 Best of County or Class 608 Blue Ribbon Classic.
- Photos not meeting the class description will be reclassified at the discretion of the judge or superintendent. If the photo cannot be reclassified it will not be judged.
- No written information about subject or photographer is allowed within the photograph.
- Entries not meeting specifications such as size and mounting criteria or entered in wrong division will not be judged.
- The superintendent reserves the right to refuse any entry deemed not suitable for the Nebraska State Fair competition and reclassify any entry incorrectly classified.
- The Nebraska State Fair reserves the right to reproduce any form of any work submitted.
- All photos are handled with care. However, the Nebraska State Fair or its employees will not be responsible for any loss or damage of entries.

Exhibit Preparation Requirements

- Photo size: With the exception of Division 5406 Class 603 Panoramas and Class 606 Best in County, all photos must be 8"x10" up to 11"x14".
- Backing: All photos 8"x10" up to 11"x14" must be mounted on 11"x14" foam board that is at least 1/8" thick and not more than 1/4" thick. Do not use cardboard, light weight foam board that won't stand up straight, or other lightweight backing. Photos must be mounted with 2 times of purple elmer glue stick, or two-sided tape completely around the entire board. Note, however, that old two-sided tape may not be reliable. May use 3M spray but is hard to work with and will bubble. Any photos not securely mounted will be removed from competition and display.
- Mats: Mats are optional but recommended if photo is 8"x10". If mats are used, they must be 11"x14" and must be firmly attached. Use quality mounting tape, 2 times of purple elmer glue stick, or two-sided tape completely around the mat.
- No Metallic Paper.
- Title Card: With the photo facedown, place the title card on the upper right side of the back of the photo backing. The title card must be no larger than 3"x5" and be mounted so that no more than 2" is visible above the photo when viewed from the left side front of the photo.

Required



- All classes should have a title on the title card. The title of the entry should be short: one to four words in length.
- The entry title written on the title card taped to the board must be visible on the left front of the photo.
- In division 5406 some classes require the location in addition to the title.

- Identification: Identify your photo by placing the following information on the bottom half of the photo back:
 - Exhibitor's Name
 - Age if 17 years or under
 - City
 - Phone Number
 - Title
 - Division and Class Numbers
 - Editing used – check rules for Amateur
- Presentation: All photos must be unframed. Do not cover with cellophane, acetate, or glass. There should be no hooks, wires, or hangers attached to the photo.

Judging Process and Criteria

All judge's decisions are final. Only the judges and assistants will be allowed in the judging area during judging. Photography exhibits will be judged according to the following criteria: technique, composition, impact, originality, print & mounting quality, and overall presentation.

Judging results will be available at www.statefair.org, Menu, Competitive Exhibits, and scroll down to Photography. Results will be posted toward the beginning of fair once the superintendents have verified all judging.

Photography Department Eligibility

- Amateur- one who does photography as a hobby, does not advertise, teach, or attempt to sell their work and uses only basic editing functions. Basic editing functions include, using software for auto adjustments, exposure, white balance, brightness, contrast, rotation, cropping, and image size. No erasing or advance sharpening of images. When using a smart phone or tablet only basic editing can be used. Advanced image editing including altering the background or advanced sharpening is prohibited. Entries in the Amateur division should be photos taken without extensive post photo software manipulation.
- Advanced Amateur – one who uses advanced photography editing software and techniques, but any income gained from teaching or selling photography is less than \$3,000 a year. Advanced editing included the use of the full features of photo editing software to enhance or alter the original image taken by the camera.

Entering Exhibits – The deadline is Tuesday, August 11, at 11:59 PM

Exhibitors may purchase \$5 Exhibitor Gate Tickets. A maximum of 5 exhibitor tickets per family is allowed. No refunds will be given on any unused or lost tickets. To purchase these tickets, go to <http://bit.ly/4bVSm5v> and use password CVENT. Exhibitor tickets go off sale Thursday August 27, 2026 at 11:59pm.

Please note that daily gate admission for seniors (age 60+) and kids (6-12) is \$6 for any day of the fair. Find additional ticket deals and details at <https://www.statefair.org/plan-your-visit/pricing/>.

Online Registration: The most time and cost-efficient way to enter is online. Exhibitors can enter all their open-class exhibits and order exhibitor tickets (optional) in one session. Online entry begins around July 1. Instructions on how to enter online are found on the website www.statefair.org – Menu – Competitive Exhibits – Scroll down to Photography – Online Entry

Mail-In or In-Person Registration: When using mail-in or in-person registration, the exhibitor must use a separate form for each department entered. Either print the entry form from the following link: [2026 Photography Entry Form](#) or request a form from the Nebraska State Fair Office, 501 E Fonner Park Rd Ste 200, Grand Island, NE 68801, Phone 308-382-1620.

Entry forms must be mailed, faxed, or delivered to the Nebraska State Fair. The deadline for Photography is Tuesday, August 11, at 11:59 pm. Mail-in entry must be postmarked by August 11.

- Mailing Address: Nebraska State Fair, PO Box 1387, Grand Island, NE 68802-1387
- Fax: 308-384-1555
- In-person delivery: Nebraska State Fair, 501 E Fonner Park Rd Ste 200, Grand Island, NE 68801

Guidelines for Completing Entry Form

- Enter all items you plan to bring. There is no entry fee. Items not brought will be deleted at the fair.
- Use the photo title for the entry description. Limit the title to between one and four words.
- No late entries including add-ons and substitutes at delivery check-in.
- Retain a copy of the entry form. A copy is required when you deliver your exhibits. For online registration, print either the entry receipt activity report or a packing/loading report.

Delivery of Exhibits – The deadline is Thursday, August 20, at 3 pm

Entries can be delivered in person, at drop off locations, or sent by USPS, FedEx, or UPS.

- In Person: bring exhibits, along with a copy of the entry form, using Gate 5 to the 4-H/FFA Fieldhouse, any of the following times:
 - Wednesday, August 19th from 3pm – 8pm
 - Thursday, August 20th from 8am – 3pm
- Ship by USPS, UPS, or FedEx: Refer to [Shipping Options](#) for detailed instructions on packaging, where to send exhibits. Return labels must be prepaid and mailed with entry. Send USPS, UPS, or FedEx delivery services to the Nebraska State Fair, 501 E Fonner Park Rd Suite 200, Grand Island NE 68801.

Return of Exhibits – Monday, September 7, 6 pm – 8 pm & Tuesday, September 8, 8 am - noon

Options for the return of exhibits are in person, at pick up locations, or sent by USPS, FedEx, or UPS

- In person: Your or your designated representative must sign a release list to collect the exhibits. If you sent your exhibits by mail or shipping service but wish to pick them up in person you can do so with identification.
 - Monday, September 7, 6pm – 8pm early release is prohibited
 - Tuesday, September 8, 8am - noon
- Shipping: Exhibitors who want items returned by mail or a delivery service must send a prepaid return labels with the entry as well as a box/envelope to ship it in and the exhibitor must make this notation on the entry form enclosed with exhibits. Items will not be accepted or returned by COD. Refer to [Shipping Options](#) for detailed return information.
- See page 10 for Drop Off and Pick Up locations, dates, and times.

Exhibits not picked up during release time or with insufficient payment for return shipment must be picked up from the Nebraska State Fair office by Friday, October 30th. After that items will be discarded.

Divisions 5401-5402 Advanced Amateur

An Advanced Amateur is defined as one who uses advanced editing software and techniques, but any income gained from teaching or selling photography is less than \$3,000 a year. Advanced editing includes the use of the full features of photo editing software to enhance or alter the original image taken by the camera.

All entries from an advanced amateur exhibitor may only be entered in Division 5401, 5402, or 5406. Entries from an advanced amateur will not be judged if entered in amateur divisions 5403 or 5404.

Division 5401: Advanced Amateur Color

- 100 Living Animals (domesticated/wild, but not birds)
- 101 Living Birds
- 102 Living Insect Pollinators (e.g., butterflies, bees, moths, dragonflies)
- 103 Living Creatures other than animals, birds, pollinators
- 104 Living Flowers (domestic/wild)
- 105 Living Plants, Trees, Fungi, Crops (no flowers)

- 106 People, portraits (single/group) posed
- 107 People, candid (single/group) unposed
- 108 People in Sports
- 109 Nebraska Landscapes
- 110 Other Landscape/Waterscape
- 111 Cityscapes/Townscapes
- 112 Sunrises, Sunsets, Weather
- 113 Still Life
- 114 Patterns, Textures, Abstracts
- 115 Buildings, Bridges, Monuments
- 116 Mechanical/Transportation
- 117 Nebraska Farms

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Division 5402: Advanced Amateur Black & White

- 201 Living Animals (domestic/wild)
- 202 Living Birds
- 203 Living Plants, Trees, Fungi, Crops, & Flowers
- 204 People, portraits (single/group) posed
- 205 People & Sports, candid (single/group) unposed
- 207 Nebraska Landscapes
- 208 Other Landscapes/Waterscapes
- 209 Cityscapes/Townscapes
- 210 Sunrises, Sunsets, Weather
- 211 Still Life
- 212 Patterns, Textures, Abstracts
- 213 Buildings, Bridges, Monuments
- 214 Mechanical/Transportation
- 215 Nebraska Farms

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Divisions 5403-5404 Amateur

An Amateur – one who does photography as a hobby and does not advertise, teach, or attempt to sell their photographic work and uses only basic editing functions. Basic editing functions include using software for auto adjustments, exposure, white balance, brightness, contrast, rotation, cropping, and image size. No erasing or advance sharpening of images. When using a phone or tablet only basic editing can be used. Advanced image editing including the background or advanced sharpening is prohibited.

Entries in the amateur division should be photos taken without extensive post-photo software manipulation.

Division 5403: Amateur Color

- 300 Living Animals (domesticated/wild, but not birds)
- 301 Living Birds
- 302 Living Insect Pollinators (e.g., butterflies, bees, moths, dragonflies)
- 303 Living Creatures other than animals, birds, pollinators
- 304 Living Flowers (domestic/wild)
- 305 Living Plants, Trees, Fungi, Crops (no flowers)
- 306 People, portraits (single/group) posed
- 307 People, candid (single/group) unposed
- 308 People in Sports
- 309 Nebraska Landscapes

- 310 Other Landscape/Waterscape
- 311 Cityscapes/Townscapes
- 312 Sunrises, Sunsets, Weather
- 313 Still Life
- 314 Patterns, Textures, Abstracts
- 315 Buildings, Bridges, Monuments
- 316 Mechanical/Transportation
- 317 Nebraska Farms

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Division 5404: Amateur Black & White

- 401 Living Animals (domestic/wild)
- 402 Living Birds
- 403 Living Plants, Trees, Fungi, Crops, & Flowers
- 404 People, portraits (single/group) posed
- 405 People & Sports candid (single/group) unposed
- 407 Nebraska Landscapes
- 408 Other Landscapes/Waterscapes
- 409 Cityscapes/Townscapes
- 410 Sunrises, Sunsets, Weather
- 411 Still Life
- 412 Patterns, Textures, Abstracts
- 413 Buildings, Bridges, Monuments
- 414 Mechanical/Transportation
- 415 Nebraska Farms

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Divisions 5405 Youth

Same rules apply as in Amateur category in that the photographic work uses only basic editing functions. This includes using software for auto adjustments, exposure, white balance, brightness, contrast, rotation, cropping, and image size. Youth who are using advanced editing techniques should enter in the Advanced Amateur classes.

Age must be on the back of the mounting mat as of January 1st, 2026.

Division 5405: Youth Color or Black & White

Classes for exhibitors 10 years and younger. Age as of January 1st.

- 501 Landscapes, Waterscapes, Skyscapes
- 502 Living Animals (domestic/wild)
- 503 Living Plants/Flowers
- 504 People, Candid or Posed
- 505 People in Sports
- 506 Other Subjects
- 507 Birds

Classes for exhibitors 11-17 years of age, inclusive. Age as of January 1st.

- 551 Landscapes, Waterscapes, Skyscapes
- 552 Living Animals (domestic/wild)
- 553 Living Plants/Flowers
- 554 People, Candid or Posed
- 555 People in Sports

556 Other Subjects
557 Birds

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Divisions 5406 Special Classes

Color or Black & White.

Open to Advanced Amateur, Amateur, and Youth

Division 5406: Special Classes

- 602 Toned, Tinted, & Solarized: Sepia toned, single toned, tinted, and solarized photos.
- 603 Panoramas: Any panoramic print, color, or blank and white. Minimum size 4"x10". The maximum size rule of 11"x14" does not apply to this class.
- 604 Wild & Scenic Nebraska: Color prints. Photo of living wild creature(s) in its natural habitat or a natural scenic landscape. Be aware "natural" means nothing man-made should be included in this photo (fences, buildings, etc.). The image must have been taken in Nebraska. The winning photo in this class will be published in NEBRASKAland Magazine. Must include location on title card!
- 605 This is Nebraska!: Color prints. Photo depicting, promoting, or exemplifying Nebraska, its people, its lifestyle, or its landscapes, as a great place to live or visit. The image must have been taken in Nebraska. The winning photo of this class will be published in the Nebraska Farmer Magazine. Must include location on title card!
- 606 Best in County: From prior year 2025 county fair. Note that entries in this class must comply with the same Tuesday, August 11th entry deadline. Color print and black & white print judged "Best of Show" or equivalent at any 2025 Nebraska County Fair (must be a winner in 2025, since not all county fairs in Nebraska occur before the Nebraska State Fair). Sizes limitation rules do not apply for this class. The [Best In County Verification Form](#) must be completed, signed by a county fair official, and attached to the backside of the photo. Download the form from the above hyperlink or contact the Nebraska State Fair at 308-382-1620 to have one mailed to you. Must include county on the title card.
- 607 Micro Photography: Any photographs using a micro lens. Note: No cell phones.
- 608 Blue Ribbon Classic: Note that previous Best of Division winners are not eligible for this class. Nebraska State Fair blue ribbon winning entries from the last five years (2021-2025). The 11"x14" size limitation does apply in this class. Please submit the winning entry or its copy. This class is not included in the Best of Division competition however ribbons will be awarded.
- 609 Go For It!: Color or black & white prints of any subject. We threw away the rules on this one except size limits. Show off your artistic skills with your favorite photo editing software. No Limits! This class is not included in the Best of Division competition however ribbons will be awarded.
- 610 Windmills Across Nebraska: Color or black & white prints of windmills or wind turbines of Nebraska. Image must have been taken in Nebraska and location must be included on title card.
- 611 Aerial Photography: Photo of aerial view taken by drones, planes, etc. Must include location on title card.
- 612 Red, White, & Nebraska: It All Happens Here. Patriotism is all around us; flags on Main Street, veterans in small towns, county fairs and wide open skies. Capture the spirit of America's 250th birthday right here in Nebraska.

Best of Division – rosette and \$50

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Sites

For Non-Perishable Exhibits

Please package each department's exhibits separately. For example, if you are entering both textile arts and photography, which belong to different departments, package them separately. Ensure a copy of your entry form is taped to the top of each package.

Important: We will not accept exhibits that are not properly packaged. We will make an effort to return your exhibits in the same packaging used for drop-off. To make transportation easier and safer, we recommend packaging your exhibits in a box.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Locations:

This year, exhibits can be dropped off and picked up at the following locations during the Extension Office's business hours:

Drop-Off Dates:

- Thursday, August 13th and Friday, August 14th, 2026

Pick-Up Dates:

- Monday, September 14th and Tuesday, September 15th, 2026
 - Must be picked up no later than September 15th.

Location Hours:

- **Lincoln/Logan/McPherson County Extension Office:**
348 West State Farm Rd, North Platte, NE 69101
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- **Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office:**
8015 West Center Rd, Omaha, NE 68124
8:00 AM – 4:30 PM
- **Seward County Extension Office:**
322 S. 14th St, Seward, NE 68434
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Reminder: Please bring a copy of your entry form(s) when dropping off your exhibits.