



Timeline

HISTORY OF THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is an experiential event that takes place in Toronto every November at Exhibition Place. The Royal is the largest indoor agricultural show and international equestrian competition in the world, showcasing Canada's best in agricultural products and technologies. From farmers to royalty, guests from all walks of life attend and have enjoyed The Royal throughout its 87 years.

1910-1918 – The vision of The Royal began, with a need for a national fair that focused mainly on agriculture. W.A. Dryden, a strong-willed cattle breeder, along with a group of Ontario agriculturists made it their mission to host a truly national agricultural fair, and persuaded government and livestock associations to listen.

1921 – The Royal's grand opening was scheduled for 1921, but lack of a heating system put a "damper" on the situation and delayed the opening date until the following year when they could make a great first impression on the public.

1922 – The first Royal was held on November 22, 1922 with an astonishing 17,000 agricultural entries and over 150,000 visitors and over \$70,000 in prize money handed out.

1925 – The Royal's Tropical and Fancy Fish Show was founded, featuring colourful creatures as well as artistic creations in aquariums on display. The show was particularly popular during the Great Depression, as colourful fish became an inexpensive and amusing pet of choice for consumers. The show lasted until the late 1970's.

1934 – Dressage was first introduced to The Royal with a demonstration given by the famous Lippezan stallions of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. Dressage is an Olympian sport testing the skills of the rider and training of the horse in a series of graceful and precise maneuvers. Dressage, likened to ballet for the horse and rider, is still featured at The Royal today.

1940's – During World War II, the Coliseum and Horse Palace buildings were converted to barracks as troops gathered prior to departing overseas, and came back there upon their return home.

1946 – The government introduced a new cattle competition funded with money from the Prince of Wales, called the King's Guineas in honour of The Royal figure. The name was later changed to the Queen's Guineas when Queen Elizabeth took her father's place as the head of the monarchy.

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1950's – To help promote Canadian milk production and Jersey cows, Jersey breeders selected young women to be their Dairy Princesses throughout the Fifties. These female ambassadors had the task of travelling the country and promoting the goodness and quality of Jersey milk.

1965 – The first Sunday afternoon horse show was held, but it wasn't until 1968 that the law relaxed enough to permit the full operation of The Royal on Sundays.

1991 – Nicole Eaton and Hilary Weston stepped up the annual flower show bringing in Canada's leading landscape designers, nurseries and suppliers of garden accessories to create The Royal Winter Garden Show.

1994 – Big Ben, Canada's best-known show jumper, made his farewell to The Royal after a career that spanned 11 seasons, winning more than 40 grand prix, the first horse to win two World Cup Finals and earning more than \$1.5 million in prize money. Big Ben's former owner, Olympian Ian Millar is set to return to the 2009 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

1995 – The dormitories located at the east end of the Cow Palace were torn down – farmers had used these dormitories as their accommodations for the duration of The Royal. Because care of the animals took most of their day, it was more convenient for farmers to stay right on the grounds. Today, farmers stay in hotels close to the fairgrounds.

1997 – For The Royal's 75th anniversary, Canada Post issued a commemorative stamp to signify the anniversary. The first 750 people to enter The Royal were also admitted for 25 cents, the price of admission charged during the first year of The Royal.

2009 – The Royal is back in its 87th year – with a crop-full of fun and exciting things going on from agricultural competitions, new and exciting agri-food innovations on display, wine and cheese tastings, five-star chefs, celebrities and more!

The Royals Visit The Royal

Since The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair's inception, members of the British Royal family have attended and participated in the Fair. Attendees include Queen Elizabeth II, The Royal patron of the Fair, as well as Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips, Fergie, the Duchess of York, and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent amongst others.

For more information visit www.royalfair.org – November 6-15, 2009
Materials and images can be downloaded for media use

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