

County Fair Racing in Arizona

Arizona has a rich history of county fair racing beginning in 1949 when racing was conducted at the State Fairgrounds in Phoenix. In 1950 County Fair Racing expanded to Graham, Navajo, Pima and Yavapai counties in addition to racing at the State Fairgrounds.

A.R.S. § 5-111(e) states:

“Any county fair racing association may apply to the commission for one racing meeting each year and the commission shall set the number of days and the dates of the meetings. A racing meeting conducted under this subsection shall be operated in such manner so that all profits accrue to the county fair racing association, and the county fair racing association may deduct from the pari-mutuel pool the same amount as prescribed in subsection C of this section. All county fair racing meetings, whether conducted by county fair racing associations under this subsection or by an individual, corporation or association other than a county fair racing association, are exempt from the payment to the state of the percentage of the pari-mutuel pool prescribed by subsection D of this section and are also exempt from the provisions of section 5-111.01.”

In past years, many counties awarded race dates by the commission choose to run their dates at one of the two commercial race tracks in Arizona: Turf Paradise (Phoenix) and Rillito Race Track (Tucson).

In April of 2016 Safford, Arizona (Cochise County) ran a two-day live race meet at its fairgrounds. In May 2016, Santa Cruz County (Sonoita) and Graham County (Douglas) had live race meets as well.

In 2017, it is expected that other counties in Arizona may apply to the Arizona Racing Commission for permits to run live race meets in their respective communities.