



"Hats Off to 90 Years"

July 31 – August 8, 2026

Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart Rules and Regulations

The titles of Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen, Lea County Fair & Rodeo Princess, and Lea County Fair & Rodeo Sweetheart hold a place of honor and prestige. These titles represent not only the western way of life, but the quality of leadership among the young women in Lea County.

The objective of the Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart Contest is to select representatives for the Lea County Fair & Rodeo. The Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart serve as ambassadors of the Fair & Rodeo to the general public, exhibiting excellent sportsmanship and high moral and ethical standards, while adding a flare of femininity. The young ladies that hold these titles should be able to speak intelligently, with authority, and with familiarity and knowledge of Lea County and the Lea County Fair & Rodeo. Title holders are expected to act, speak and dress according to the prestige the title deserves at all times during their reign. In addition, the following rules will apply:

MANDATORY MEET & GREET – Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 6pm

FAIR BOARD MEETING ROOM

2026 CONTEST REGULATIONS

1. A contestant must be enrolled in a Lea County School and/or must prove residency in Lea County, New Mexico prior to the day of entry deadline. The Queen Committee reserves the right to request proof of residency.
 - a. Queen Contestants - Must be 17 years old and up to 24 years old by December 31, 2026.
 - b. Princess Contestants - Must be 13 years old and up to 16 years old by December 31, 2026.
 - c. Sweetheart Contestants - Must be 9 years old and up to 12 years old by December 31, 2026.
2. The contestant shall be a single girl, never have been married and never to have had a child or minor dependent.
3. The Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart Contest will allow a minimum of one contestant to compete for the title. The title will only be awarded if the contestant proves to the judges to be adequately qualified with an overall score of 70% or higher.
4. A Candidate will be chosen as Queen-elect, Princess-elect, or Sweetheart-elect and will reign as the Queen, Princess or Sweetheart the following year.
5. The newly elected Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen must enter and participate in the New Mexico State Fair Queen Contest the year following her official reign in order to claim the \$2,500 scholarship. The check will be made out to the school of her choice. For the NMSF contest, she will be responsible for providing her own horse and must arrange for transportation to and from Albuquerque, NM. She is encouraged to raise funds to participate in the New Mexico State Fair Queen Contest in order to build community and business relationships. The Lea County Fair Board will pay the entry fee for the New Mexico State Fair Contest and up to \$150 in expenses with proper receipts. The New Mexico State Fair Queen application must be postmarked by August 31, 2026.

DISQUALIFICATION

A contestant shall be disqualified if:

1. Inappropriate (e.g. public display of affection, inappropriate dress, cell phone use) or unsportsmanlike behavior in any public forum including social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Finsta, TikTok, etc.) from a title holder, contestant, parent/guardian, or anyone associated with the contestant before, during, or after the competition is cause for dismissal and relinquishment of all awards at the discretion of the Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair & Rodeo Board. Title holders and contestants are expected to represent Lea County and the Lea County Fair & Rodeo in a professional manner at all times.
2. The Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair & Rodeo Board welcome and encourage family and friends to attend all events designated in the agenda. The support and assistance of family and friends during the contest is very important to the confidence and success of each contestant. At no time during the contest will parents/guardians or others associated with the contestant be allowed to interfere with the judges or contest officials. This is cause for dismissal from the contest. A judge may approach a contestant after the competition concerning areas of improvement.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Each contestant is required to attend scheduled events/activities prior to and during fair week. Contestants must be available to meet with rodeo sponsors for public relations work when asked. Contestants must be in full western dress (including a hat, belt, & boots) and wear the contestant sash at all times. Scheduled contest activities will include, but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ Luncheons with Civic Groups (*prepared speech will be given and MUST be memorized*)
- ❖ Radio Interviews
- ❖ Livestock Sale
- ❖ Livestock Breakfast
- ❖ Fair Parade
- ❖ Rodeo Performances
- ❖ Media Activities/Pictures
- ❖ Written Test
- ❖ Personal Interview
- ❖ Prepared Speech
- ❖ Modeling
- ❖ Impromptu Questions
- ❖ Mutton Bustin'
- ❖ Sell Day Sheets
- ❖ Special Rodeo
- ❖ Livestock Shows
- ❖ Horsemanship Clinics
- ❖ Personality Clinics
- ❖ Rodeo Introductions
- ❖ Horsemanship
- ❖ Horsemanship Knowledge
- ❖ Queen's Run
- ❖ Flag Run

Points will be included in the judge's final score for your attendance at the above functions. One Rotary Luncheon is mandatory.

LUNCHEON TICKETS

All contestants must be responsible for selling tickets at \$20 each. The number of tickets required to sell is based on the number of contestants. Money is due on Thursday, August 6, 2026 by 3pm to the Lea County Fair Office. All contestants are responsible for returning any unsold tickets after the mandatory amount has been sold. **NO PERSONAL CHECKS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

PASSES

The contestant's sash will be her ticket for admittance into all events at the Lea County Fair. Contestants are expected to be at each rodeo performance, the Special Rodeo, and the Livestock Breakfast and Sale for public relations. Other fair events, including Livestock Shows and Mutton Bustin' will be scheduled. Parents and chaperones are encouraged to purchase tickets early. Season Passes will be available in the Fair Office until July 31, 2026. General admission tickets available at www.leacountyfair.net.

SILENT AUCTION

Each contestant must acquire two (2) items valued at a \$50 minimum each for a silent auction to be held during fair & rodeo week. These items may be purchased, but the purpose is for the contestant to build community and business relationships within Lea County.

JUDGING

The Lea County Fair & Rodeo Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart Contest will be judged on personality and horsemanship. Contestants should be poised, confident, courteous and genuinely sportsmanlike at all times.

A silent judge may be present to observe the contestants during any part of the Fair & Rodeo. The silent judge's score may be included in the final score. At no time during the day of the contest is the contestant to be using her cell phone.

A sifting committee will be present before the commencement of the horsemanship portion of the contest. The committee will observe the horse's equipment and the welfare of the contestant's horse. Please see ATTACHMENT 1 for a list of proper equipment. The committee or judges have the authority to excuse any horse due to lameness or illegal equipment.

HORSEMANSHIP

The horsemanship portion of the contest will account for 60% of the judging criteria. Required horsemanship attire includes solid white, long-sleeved, button-down collared shirt, blue denim jeans, belt, felt hat and boots. The Contestant's shirt must be tucked in at all times. Hair should be in a neatly curled ponytail. Neck scarves and jewelry are acceptable. No sequins, fringe, vests, jackets, or pullovers may be worn. Contestants will be judged on:

1. Western Horsemanship/Rail Work
 - Position of feet and hands
 - General balance, control, and poise of rider
 - Display of confidence and personal appearance
 - Grooming of horse, proper fit, and cleanliness of tack
2. Required Riding Pattern
 - Knowledge and awareness of leads, speed, stopping, and backing
 - Proper execution of pattern
 - Control and skill in handling horse
 - Ability to control a proper Queen's mount and dismount
3. Horsemanship Interview
 - Immediately following the required pattern, before exiting the arena, each contestant will dismount her horse in front of the judges for her horsemanship interview
 - Questions may include but are not limited to the contestant's knowledge of horses, tack, horsemanship, and rodeo
 - Ability of the contestant to answer questions with poise and ease, including proper grammar, knowledge, and delivery
 - After answering the judge's questions, the contestant will properly re-mount her horse and exit the arena
 - Interview will be approximately fifteen (15) minutes in length
4. Horsemanship Free Time
 - Each contestant is required to turn in a free time pattern, to the Fair Office, no later than 3:00pm, Friday, July 25th
 - Time will be called at three (3) minutes
 - Props or aids are not required, but may include cones, barrels, poles, etc.; each contestant is responsible for set-up and tear-down of any props or aids used during her free time
 - Music, bareback, or roman riding will not be allowed
 - Originality, creativity, and versatility, as well as control and skill in executing the pattern correctly will be part of the judging criteria

5. Flag Run (for Queen and Princess contestants)
 - Speed of run
 - Control of flag
 - Projection of confidence

6. Queen's Run
 - Control and speed of run
 - Queen wave
 - Projection of personality, self-confidence, and crowd appeal
 - SMILE

PERSONALITY

The personality portion of the contest will account for 40% of the judging criteria. Private interviews will be conducted by the judges prior to the scheduled personality luncheon where each contestant will model, give a prepared speech, and respond to an impromptu question. Contestants will be judged on:

1. Appearance
 - Poise – posture, manners, ladylike behavior and self-confidence
 - Modeling – ability, style, and confidence
 - Each contestant is required to turn in a modeling outfit description no later than 3:00pm, Friday, July 25, to the Fair Office
 - Fashion – western attire that is appropriate and stylish with particular attention given to modest fit (below the knee and $\frac{3}{4}$ to full length sleeves), style, color, and coordination. Formal western attire includes dress, belt, cowboy hat, and boots.
 - General overall appearance, grooming, and cleanliness

2. Private Interview
 - Conversational ability, intelligence, maturity, and common sense
 - Integrity, high moral standards, sincerity, and disposition
 - Genuine interest in people and consideration for others
 - Interviews will be approximately fifteen (15) minutes in length

3. Speech
 - Contestants' speech topic should reflect the current year's Fair & Rodeo theme
 - Speeches will be limited to two (2) minutes for Sweetheart, three (3) minutes for Princess and four (4) minutes for Queen, at which time will be called
 - Projection of personality to audience
 - Enthusiasm, confidence, and showmanship
 - Richness, expression, and projection of voice
 - Enunciation, clarity, and English diction
 - Interesting and well thought out speech content
 - Flow and appropriateness of speech
 - Time used efficiently
 - Points will be deducted for not following the length guidelines

4. Impromptu Questions
 - Ability to respond quickly and intelligently with poise and self-control
 - Ability to use proper grammar, knowledge, and delivery

- Questions may pertain to, but are not limited to Lea County, fair and rodeo, or current events

5. Written Test

- Questions may relate to but are not limited to the contestant's knowledge of Lea County, rodeo, horses, tack, and current events.

TIE BREAKING PROCEDURE

In the event that the final score is a tie, it will be broken by the highest horsemanship score, then by the highest personal interview score, then by the highest speech score. If a tie still exists, participation points will be given for attending pre-contest activities.

FINALITY OF JUDGES' SCORING

As a condition of entry into the contest, the contestant agrees that the judges' scoring is FINAL in all aspects and are not subject to appeal by any person or body; administrative or judicial.

CONGENIALITY AWARD

Contestants will vote by secret ballot for the Congeniality Award. The Congeniality Award will be awarded to the contestant that demonstrates friendliness, sincerity, and a genuine and caring attitude towards the other contestants, as well as a pleasant and courteous demeanor throughout the contest. These points will not be included with the judges' final scores.

CROWNING

The coronation will take place on Saturday, August 8th at 3:00 PM. All contestants are expected to be present at the coronation. The Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart will be crowned at that time. All awards and prizes will be presented during the coronation ceremony and may be picked up following the final rodeo performance. The \$2,500 scholarship award will be presented to the Queen's college of choice at the conclusion of the Queen's official reign and her participation in the NMSF Queen's Contest.

The newly crowned Queen/Princess/Sweetheart, along with her parents or guardians will be expected to meet briefly with the Queen Committee immediately after coronation on Saturday, August 8th to sign the Prize and Award Release as well as the Expectation Statement.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. If selected as Lea County Fair & Rodeo Royalty, winners are responsible for their own transportation, clothing, and expenses incurred while representing the Lea County Fair & Rodeo.
2. The contestant agrees they do not presently hold a crown, nor will they participate in another contest if selected as Lea County Fair and Rodeo Royalty.
3. Any donations of money, clothing, horses, tack, etc. received by the contestant for the contestant's sole use must be with the donor's knowledge and understanding that it is for the contestant's personal benefit and not a silent auction item.
4. The contestant agrees that the Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair & Rodeo Board shall determine and manage the method of conducting the competition including time, method, and manner of judging, presentation, and supervision of all awards. The decisions of the persons designated by the Lea County Fair & Rodeo Board to judge the various events in any and all matters pertaining to the selection of the winners shall be FINAL in all respects.
5. By signing and submitting this application and contract, the contestant agrees that:
 - Each requirement of eligibility set forth has been met
 - All facts and representations presented by the contestant are true and accurate

- The contestant and parents or guardians will abide by all rules and regulations of the Lea County Fair Board as set forth by the Queen Committee in the period before, during, and the year following
- The contestant has never been convicted of any criminal offense and there are no criminal charges presently pending against the contestant
- The contestant does not use or consume any illegal controlled substances or engage in the illegal use of alcohol or other dangerous substances
- The contestant will not curse, smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, or be under the influence of narcotics at any time after her application is received by the Queen Committee
- Any unsatisfactory behavior before, during, and the year following the contest will be cause for dismissal of the contestant with relinquishment of title and all prizes and awards
- The Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair Board shall have sole discretion in determining whether a contestant may continue to participate in the program in the event that any statement or representation by the contestant is found not true or accurate or that any action by the contestant is inconsistent with the rules and regulations of the program
- The Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair Board reserves the right to monitor any form of social media
- The Queen Committee and the Lea County Fair Board reserve the right to refuse an application.

6. The Contestant sashes, as well as the Queen, Princess, and Sweetheart perpetual chaps are property of the Lea County Fair and Rodeo and must be returned to the Fair Office at the end of the contest or the end of the respective reign.

7. The value of the Lea County Fair and Rodeo Queen/Princess/Sweetheart is limitless. She is the official representative of the Lea County Fair and Rodeo and should constantly be aware of the value of public relations between the general public and the Lea County Fair Officials with whom she comes in contact. The experience gained during her reign will be one that will enrich her life in countless ways.

The contestant and parent/legal guardian have read the rule packet and agree to abide by all rules, regulations and deadlines set forth by the Lea County Fair Board and the Queen Committee. When signed by the contestant and approved by the Lea County Fair Board, this application and contract, together with its attachments, shall solely and exclusively determine the contestant's rights, privileges and responsibilities to the Lea County Fair Board. No other oral or written statement that is in any way inconsistent with the provisions of this application and contract shall be binding upon the contestant, the Lea County Fair Board or the Queen Committee.

Contestant Signature

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Signed before me on this _____ day of _____, 2026

Notary Signature

Notary Seal

HORSEMANSHIP ATTACHMENT

Horses should be shown at a walk, jog and lope on a reasonable loose rein or light contact without undue restraint.

Horses are to be reversed to in inside (away from the rail) unless specified by the pattern.

Split reins are the only acceptable style of reins and shall be draped down the left side of the horse.

Riders must one hand rein their horses and the hand must not be hanged. The left hand is to be around the reins; index finger only between split reins is permitted.

Pattern Performance: The contestant should perform the pattern accurately, precisely, smoothly and with a reasonable amount of promptness. Increasing speed of the maneuvers performed increases the degree of difficulty; however, accuracy and precision should not be sacrificed for speed.

Simple changes are accepted, but flying changes are preferred. Scoring will reflect such.

In the event of equipment failure, the contestant will receive a score for the maneuvers executed within the allotted time. Reruns will not be allowed.

The judges have the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment which is unsafe, give an unfair advantage or believed to be inhumane.

Horses 5-years-old and younger may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, curb bit, half-breed or spade bit. Horses 6-years-old and older may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed or spade bit.

Hackamore means the use of a flexible, braided rawhide leather or rope bosal, the core of which must be flexible. No rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded. Horse hair bosals are prohibited. Mechanical hackamore nosepieces must be covered in leather and cannot have visible or bare metal in contact with the horse's head.

A curb bit must be used with a curb strap or curb chain properly attached so as to make contact with the horse's chin.

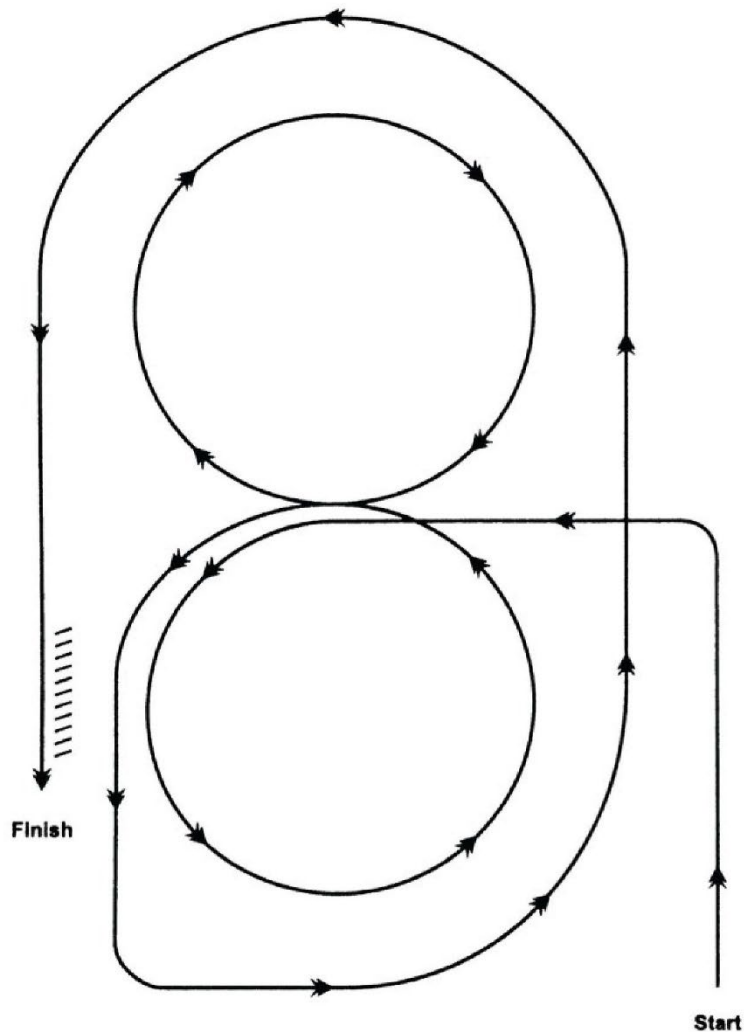
A breast collar and rear cinch are suggested.

Protective boots, leg wraps and bandages are allowed.

Prohibited equipment includes saw tooth bits, hock bobbles, tack collars, tack curb straps or tack hackamores; whips, war bridles, wire or solid metal curb straps, wire or cable tie-downs, bumper bits; metal bosals, metal longeing hackamores; chambons. Headstalls made of metal, twisted rawhide or rope may not be used on a horse's head. Running martingales, belly bands, cavessons; riding in a curb bit without a curb strap, draw reins attached between or around the front legs, side reins, romel reins, round reins, or draw reins are not allowed. Fenders or stirrups may not be connected by string.

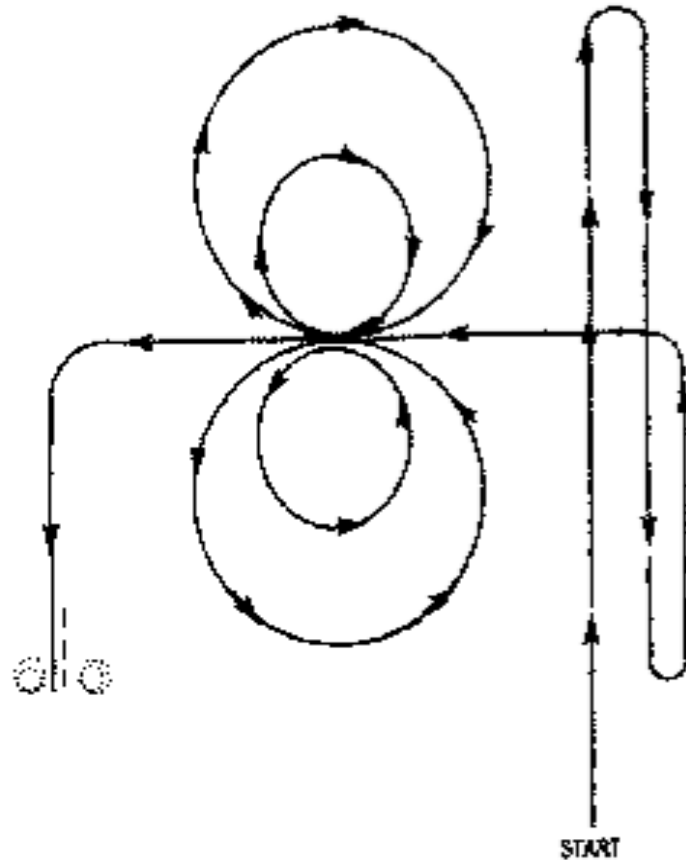
These rules were derived from the 2023 American Quarter Horse Association rulebook. The AQHA rulebook may be referred to for further clarification should any question arise. The committee reserves the right to disqualify a contestant at any time not limited to unsportsmanlike behavior, a dangerous, unfit, lame or unsound horse or illegal equipment.

LEA COUNTY FAIR & RODEO
SWEETHEART REQUIRED RIDING PATTERN



1. Do extended jog along the side of arena, then to center
2. Begin lope at center of arena and lope left circle on left lead
3. Change leads at center of arena and lope right circle on right lead
4. Change leads and continue loping around end of arena
5. Once on the straight, increase speed and continue around end of arena
6. Stop and back at least 10 feet
7. Hesitate to show completion of pattern, trot across the arena to the judges

LEA COUNTY FAIR & RODEO
QUEEN REQUIRED RIDING PATTERN



1. Start on right side of arena and lope to far end of arena
2. Stop and rollback to the right, continue to other end of arena
3. Stop and rollback to the left, continue to center of arena
4. Lope small, slow circle to left
5. Lope large circle to left with fast speed, change leads
6. Lope small slow circle to right
7. Lope large circle to right with fast speed, change leads
8. Continue down arena
9. Stop and back at least 10 feet
10. Complete one 360 spin to the left
11. Complete one 360 spin to the right
12. Hesitate to show completion of pattern, trot across the arena to the judges