

The Bandera PROPHEET

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The show goes on. Bandera Ham Rodeo set for Spring Break

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The Bandera Prophet

Since the Bandera Wranglers took over what was formerly known as the Wild Hog Explosion, the annual fundraising event has detonated into a two-day ham-packed festival. A lot of controversy last year translated into a lot of attention, which generated a record attendance for the Bandera Bacon Bash - the temporary new name that has since changed again to the Bandera Ham Rodeo and Music Fest.

Despite protestors who claim the hog catch promotes cruelty to animals and a PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) movement to secure an injunction against it, the Wranglers have pushed forward with bigger plans than the event has seen in the last 18 years since it was conceived.

On Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14, at the tail-end of Spring Break, the fest will feature a sanctioned cook-off, Ms. Bacon Pageant, live music, kids' activities and, of course, the wild hog catch. Last year, more than \$20,000 was raised and donated to the Bandera County Boys and Girls Club. This year, a portion of the proceeds will again benefit the Boys and Girls Club, and the remaining profit will help fund the Wranglers' additional philanthropic efforts throughout the community. Tracy Byrd and other performers will hit the stage Friday night; the cook-off and hog events will be Saturday. Vendors will be on the Mansfield Park grounds both days. Gates will open at 4 p.m. on Friday, and 10 a.m. on Saturday.

HISTORY

A cultural showdown between a Bandera tradition and urban ideology hit home in early 2019.

The Wranglers picked up the reins of the Wild Hog Explosion's 17th year after the previous sponsor was forced to leave the arena with two weeks to spare, in the midst of pressure from certain animal rights groups that claimed the handling and treatment of wild hogs was inhumane. Thinking there wasn't enough time to get another sponsor, the Board of Directors for the Bandera Library - the Explosion's primary beneficiary - voted in March to call off the event. Throwing a Hail Mary, Event Coordinator Genie Strickland approached the Bandera Wranglers and asked if they would be able to take it on.

After working out some formalities, including changing the name of the event to the Bacon Bash, the Warriors began the task of damage control before going full steam ahead and planning the final details of the event. Expecting to sell about 1,000 wrist bands based on past record, the Wranglers bought 1,500. They sold out before 1 p.m. the day of the event.

Protestors did arrive and stood with picket signs at the entrance of Mansfield Park. Law enforcement was posted near the gate, and no issues were reported.

PETA, with animal rights group Unparalleled Suffering, filed an injunction against the Bandera Wranglers with the governor's office. An investigator with the Texas Animal Health Commission spoke with the Wranglers, and the two entities are reportedly working together to make sure all necessary permits are filed and they are in compliance.

Also, the Wranglers received a Cease and Desist for the name Bacon Bash, because it was "confusingly similar to another one in Texas." They said Bacon Bash Texas, a separate and unrelated non-profit in Cranfills Gap, had received threats from protestors who mistakenly associated them with the Bandera event.

In December, PETA commissioned a mobile billboard to drive through Austin that reads, "The Wild Pig Chase: A Texas Disgrace. Governor Abbott: End It Now."

“The pigs used in this event are subjected to prolonged pain and distress that is inhumane and completely unnecessary,” PETA veterinarian Dr. Ingrid Taylor said in an article published by PETA, calling upon Texas Governor Greg Abbott to issue an executive order stopping the Bandera Ham Rodeo. “This event ... has nothing to do with ... the appropriate management of wild species, but is merely an exercise in cruelty.” In an article published by KXAN in Austin, Bandera Wrangler President Nick Barron responded to PETA.

“This Bandera Ham Rodeo is Ranch style rodeo event and serves as training not only children but adults how to safely handle these dangerous animals,” Barron wrote. “We try to educate the community [about] the hog epidemic, the hogs are trapped locally, fed and watered, and after the event sent to an approved slaughter facility. This event generates enough charitable funds to allow us to support Christmas toy drives, Thanksgiving food drives, highway clean ups and other community related events, organizations and charities. We support those in need, we take care of the environment, and we help to decrease, even if it’s only a truck load a year, Texas’ hog population... We will not be bullied. We will not back down, the event will continue to grow under the Bandera Wranglers and continue to support our community.”

SIGN UP

It’s not too late to sign up as a volunteer, sponsor or vendor. Go to banderawranglers.org for more information.

Ticket pricing is as follows:

~ \$40 - Weekend Pass: Admission for both days and includes the Ham Rodeo, the Tracy Byrd Concert with George Dearborn, Brett Mullins Band and Rebel Roxie, as well as the Ms. Bacon Pageant, the BBQ Cook-off, and all Saturday activities.

~ \$10 - Saturday Only Ticket: Admission to the Opening Ceremonies, Hog Catch, Hog Call, Pig Races and Kids Zone.

~ \$5 - Kids 5 to 12 (Under 5 are free)