



- Kelley Cox Post Independent

Strang Ranch to host sheepdog finals

September event expected to draw up to 12,000 to area

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CARBONDALE, Colorado — The Strang Ranch National Sheep Dog Finals, scheduled for Sept. 13-20 near Carbondale, is expected to draw as many as 12,000 spectators and participants to the area.

According to a presentation to the Garfield County commissioners on Aug. 15, there may be as many as 1,000 people or more per day at the ranch, which is located on County Road 102 in Missouri Heights.

And on the day of the championships, said event manager Tom Boas, the numbers could swell to as many as 3,000 to 4,000.

"It's the Superbowl for doggies," said Boas to the Garfield Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

Boas also is the director of Habitat for Humanity, one of the nonprofit organizations involved in the event.

Two sheepdog trials have been held at the Strang Ranch in the past, but the upcoming event will dwarf those earlier activities.

According to the Strang Ranch website, the event will bring competitors from around the U.S. and Canada, competing for more than \$40,000 in prize money and titles of 2011 National Sheepdog Champion and the 2011 National Nursery Champion (for younger dogs).

Bridget Strang, daughter of ranch owners Mike and Kathleen "Kit" Strang, provided the BOCC with an illustration depicting the layout of the event, which is to include a dozen or so food vendors, and nearly that many crafts vendors.

There are to be grandstands for spectators, and nearby camping for dog handlers as well as for spectators, according to the illustration.

In addition to the sheepdog finals, there are complementary activities in Carbondale leading up to the six-day event.

Kit Strang told the Post Independent on Tuesday that there will be a demonstration of sheepdog skills at 7 p.m. today by Grand Junction handler Jim Swift, in the field beside the Comfort Inn on Cowen Drive at the north edge of town.

The Garfield County commissioners, acting as the county's liquor licensing board, on Monday approved a beer and wine license for the event.

At the same time, Building and Planning Director Fred Jarman told the event organizers that they were lacking a crucial permit, without which the event could not go forward.

Jarman told Bridget Strang that a permit was needed for any event scheduled to last longer than 10 hours. He assured Strang the permit could be arranged in time for the event to go forward as planned.

The license to sell beer and wine was issued to Habitat for Humanity, with headquarters in New Castle, which is one of the nonprofit organizations involved in the event.

The main financial beneficiary of the event is the Aspen Valley Land Trust in Carbondale, which is raising a 100-strong army of volunteers to staff the gates and manage the parking for the event, according to Melissa Sumera, officer manager of AVLTL.

Sumera stressed that spectators are not allowed bring their dogs to the event, to avoid distractions that might interfere with the competition.

Sumera said there will be a nearby "doggy daycare" facility, intended to house dogs of people coming from out of town.

Locals, she said, should leave their dogs at home.

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