

# Knox Public Health

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## **Portion of county fair cancelled**

With the support of local officials, Health Commissioner Julie Miller has cancelled the portion of the Knox County Fair referred to as the senior fair. This includes grandstand events, most food vendors, merchant exhibits and other displays. The fair is slated to open on Sunday. All Junior Fair activities and harness racing will still take place as scheduled.

Initially committed to staging the annual fair, local officials lately have struggled with how to conduct the fair safely in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. With an increase in positive cases of COVID-19 and the daunting task of enforcing prevention measures, cancellation of the fair had lately become a topic of discussion at various meetings. Among the local officials involved in the discussion and supportive of Miller's decision are the Knox County Commissioners, Knox County Fair Board President Dustin Beheler, Knox County Prosecutor Chip McConville, Knox County Sheriff Dave Shafer, Mount Vernon Fire Chief Chad Christopher and EMA Director Mark Maxwell.

"After discussing the issue with fair board representatives, the local health department and considering Governor DeWine's new directives, we felt it was the appropriate response," said Knox County Commissioner Thom Collier. "There was not a way to assure the safety of the public and maintain an environment conducive to operating a fair."

As health commissioner, Miller has the authority to cancel the fair in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code and the current Ohio public health emergency order which was issued in the spring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In my position as health commissioner for almost 10 years, I have made many difficult decisions, but have been fortunate that none of my previous decisions have impacted so many individuals in such a stressful time in our community," said Miller. "This decision is sure to upset many people, but I feel the health risks to the community outweigh the benefits of a fair."

Despite the cancellation of popular events and possible financial loss to the fair board, Beheler said "I would not want to have the fair this year and have someone get sick and die and then, that person not be able to attend next year's fair," said Beheler.

Knox County's COVID-19 positive cases, which have been relatively low compared to neighboring counties, have quadrupled since Memorial Day and topped 100 today (Thurs. 7/23). So far in July, there has been an increase of more than 60 cases involving all age groups and most cases attributed to community spread. During Governor DeWine's press conference today (Thurs. 7/23) Knox County moved to the orange risk level reflecting the increase in positive cases. The orange designation recommends that residents decrease in-person interactions outside their household and avoid contact with anyone who is considered high-risk. High-risk individuals should take extra care to follow precautions.

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