

Houston Rodeo canceled after local COVID-19 cases

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RAW: Officials announce cancellation of Houston Rodeo

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and health officials held a joint news conference to announce that the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo would be canceled due to the coronavirus COVID-19 and emergency health declarations would be issued for the city and county.

HOUSTON - The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has been canceled because of Coronavirus COVID-19.

Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and local health officials held a joint conference Wednesday afternoon to announce the major closure.

This is the first time in HLSR history that it has been closed after opening 88 years ago.

Mayor Turner says he is signing an emergency health declaration that will remain in place at least seven days.

Starting Wednesday at 4 p.m., the [Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo](#) will be closed, including the concerts.

TIMELINE: How the Coronavir COVID-19 unfolded in the greater Houston area

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ officials released the following statement:

In the interest of public health, the City of Houston and the Houston Health Department have ordered the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ to close. The Rodeo will respectfully and dutifully comply with the City's order.

The Rodeo is deeply saddened; however, the safety and well-being of our guests and our community is our top priority. Out of precaution, the City has decided that this is the best course of action for our community.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has been a fabric of this community since 1932. Having to close early is extremely difficult as guests, volunteers, exhibitors, rodeo athletes and entertainers look forward to the 20 days of the Rodeo each year.

We look forward to the 2021 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to continue to promote agriculture, education, entertainment and Western heritage. We will provide additional information as it becomes available. Updates will be posted c rodeohouston.com/2020.

Major cancellations in Houston amid Coronavirus fears

Vendors and rodeo goers are disappointed in the cancellation.

Mayor Turner also announced that the Tour de Houston, which was set to start this upcoming week, will be rescheduled. If it can't be rescheduled, it will be canceled.

This comes after [14 COVID-19 cases have been reported](#) in the greater Houston area, including two in the City of Houston, and five in Harris County.

All of the cases were travel-related, except [the Montgomery County case](#). The patient has not traveled out of the area, which indicates he could have contracted it via community spread.

RELATED: [Montgomery Co. COVID-19 patient went to Bar-B-Que Cookof](#)

A few days ago a [petition calling for the closure of HLSR](#) popped up after [officials in Austin canceled SXSW](#). It currently has more than [11,000 signatures](#).

Since 1932 the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has been a staple in the city. The rodeo, which is nearly a month-long event and concert series, draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to NRG Park.

Jamie Cronk of Texian Leathers says her family has done business at the rodeo for 24 years.

"What you see on our display we've got triple of that amount in backstock that now we aren't able to sell. So it is, that part it kind of makes you sick to your stomach when you think about it. You just have to hope that we can take it back and go onto the next thing and just succeed at that," she said.

A study conducted in 2019 says the Houston rodeo had a \$227 million economic impact. The rodeo planned to distribute \$27 million through scholarships, junior show exhibitors, educational program grants and graduate assistantships. More than 2.5 million people from 75 countries attended the rodeo in 2019.

RELATED: [Rodeo Houston ticket refunds and scholarships](#)

Just on Saturday, March 7, Mayor Turner said there was no need to cancel the rodeo. "For events like the rodeo, that's very much local in nature, we see no reason at this point to cancel those types of events."

"It is heartbreaking because we have over 35,000 volunteers, a dedicated group of staff members, a lot of contractors come back year after year, our fans,

obviously our exhibitors, our contestants are all heartbroken," Joel Crowley, President and CEO of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo tells FOX 26.

The decision to shut down came after an announcement at Houston City Hall, that an emergency health declaration for the city would be signed, and a disaster declaration issued for Harris County.

"All of the events for us that are city produced, co-sponsored, and permitted for the month of March are either going to be rescheduled or canceled," said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner.

This is all out of precaution. Authorities say a Montgomery County man in his 40s with no recent travel history outside of Texas tested positive for COVID-19. He attended the rodeo BBQ cook-off on Friday, February 28.

In a separate statement, Turner added: *"While I understand the concern expressed by some, based on the current situation, public health experts indicate there is a need for the general public to avoid large gatherings in Houston. This is true of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, which has taken extra measures to help ensure the health and well-being of its attendees."*

The Rodeo did take several measures to help ensure the health and safety of rodeo goers including:

- Nearly doubled the amount of hand sanitizer stations available
- Increased backstock of hand sanitizer
- Increased frequency of sanitizing common touchpoints including handrails, doorknobs, faucets, food service counters, etc.
- Added signage at restrooms encouraging visitors to properly wash their hands
- Increased the frequency of cleaning and restocking the restrooms with hand soap and paper towels

- Increased the number of cleaning staff on site
- Directed staff and volunteers showing any symptoms of illness to stay home

"We have every reason to expect that it can spread to many many people in our community, with 80 percent of the folks having minimal or mild illness and that happens over long periods of time, we'll be able to handle that but for those percent of folks that need a hospital bed, there needs to be a hospital bed available to them," Dr. David Persse with the Houston Health Department said.

The president of the Rodeo says it will be announced on Thursday the options refunds for tickets and carnival packs purchased. It is not yet known how much a financial hit the Rodeo is taking, or how much this will affect our economy.

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