HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary =

FILE NUMBER: H.F. 2051 **DATE:** March 9, 2004

Version: As introduced and passed by Ag Policy

Authors: Harder and others

Subject: Updating County Fair Law

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Overview

Chapter 38 of Minnesota Statutes authorizes the organization of county agricultural societies for the purpose of holding county and regional fairs. Much of the language of this statute has remained virtually unchanged since the printing of Revised Laws of Minnesota in 1905. Chapter 38 authorizes state support to county fairs through annual state aid payments made by the commissioner of agriculture. House File 2051 updates some, though by no means all, of the archaic language of Chapter 38. More importantly, the bill removes several of the restrictions historically imposed on agricultural societies and the counties, townships, and cities in which fairs are held. Annual reporting requirements are simplified and strict limits on the amount of tax money a municipality can appropriate for the operation of a fair are eliminated.

Section

- 1 County agricultural societies; formation, powers. Eliminates a historic provision stating that only one agricultural society can be organized in any county.
- 2 County fair aid; pro rata distribution; conditions.
 - A county agricultural society does not become disqualified for failing to hold an annual fair if the cause is a calamity or an epidemic declared by the board of animal health. In existing statute, only a declaration by the commissioner of health could trigger the waiver from disqualification.

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Section

- Also, this section removes the requirement that the agricultural society must have 25 or more members.
- A list of premiums posted on an Internet web site will now qualify as adequate public announcement of the prizes to be awarded at the county fair. Currently, paper copies must be published and distributed.
- The annual report of an agricultural society, and records relating to the annual county fair must be provided to the commissioner of agriculture, but not necessarily on forms provided by the commissioner.
- The types of exhibits eligible for premiums is expanded to include "other products of a creative nature."
- 3 **Annual meetings; reports.** The explicit content of the reports given by the secretary and treasurer at the annual meeting of an agricultural society is simplified. A certified copy of the annual report will not need to be filed with the commissioner of agriculture and the county recorder.
- **Appropriations by municipalities.** Removes a \$1,000 per year cap on the amount a city or 4 township can contribute to an agricultural society for holding a fair.
- 5 **Appropriations for county fairs.** Removes historic caps on the amounts a county board can appropriate to an agricultural society to assist in maintaining a county fair.
- 6 Sites and buildings. Eliminates a cap of \$7,500 on the amount a county can appropriate for purposes of buying fair ground property and erecting buildings on the grounds.
- **Exemption from zoning ordinances.** Clarifies that county fair buildings are exempt from 7 zoning ordinances whether owned by the county or a county agricultural society.
- 8 **Repealer.** Repeals provisions of chapter 38 that required the commissioner of agriculture to prescribe accounting methods for agricultural societies and to examine the books of the agricultural societies. Also, deletes obsolete references to poultry associations or societies.