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COMBINE RIDES MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT
*Non-farm Families Experience Agriculture
Through the Eye of a Big Machine*

Grand Island, NE – For the ninth year at Nebraska State Fair, CASE IH will provide free combine rides to anyone who wants to experience the massive harvesting machines. The rides may be entertaining, but the activity draws fairgoers a step closer to their farm roots.

“We believe this is the only multi-machine ride experience like this out of all the state fairs in the country,” said Michael Schaefer, Grand Island plant manager for CASE IH. “We began in 2010 and it was so popular we have just continued to do it.”

Lori Cox, executive director for Nebraska State Fair, said that a big part of why CASE IH brings the combines is agricultural education. Less than two percent of the country is directly involved in production agriculture today. “It’s more than kids playing with Tonka trucks,” Cox said. “I think it is extremely difficult to draw people close to agriculture through static display – worthy effort by all means – but it’s not enough. People also need to touch and feel the way their farming neighbors are feeding the planet. This combine ride experience is a worthy approach to making that connection.”

Cox said she has begun conversations with state of Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Steve Wellman, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Vice

Chancellor Mike Boehm, vice president for Agriculture and Natural Resources. “We are talking about broadening these experiences while sharing the good news about the great careers today in agriculture, and most jobs are actually not on the farm,” she said. “How can Nebraska State Fair get high school students pumped about going into this wide industry and make a difference for a hungry world?”

Schaefer said that based on the number of souvenir tokens given out following each ride, an estimated 10,000 passengers take a trip around the Fonner Park racetrack. Certified senior employees drive the combines, as many as six running per day. “We reach thousands of kids,” he said. “If that sparks an interest in agriculture while giving them a cool thing to do, we have hit a home run.”

CASE IH has a large manufacturing plant in Grand Island, home of the State Fair. While the company does not typically provide sponsorships of this nature, Schaefer said this one is unique.

“We are the only CNH manufacturing plant that also has a state fair in its town,” he said. “Our corporate headquarters realized this was a natural fit. We have more than 100 employees that get involved in the State Fair and the rides are part of that effort of support.”

Combine rides run August 28-31 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily, located on the Fonner Park racetrack. September 1-3 hours change to 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. The rides are free with State Fair admission.

The 2018 Nebraska State Fair runs August 24 through September 3 in Grand Island. Ticket discounts are currently available at all Pump & Pantry locations or online **at StateFair.org**. Bundle prices, entertainment information and a schedule of events can be found online.

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