

PRESS RELEASE
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Kilkenny to host Klik Pour On All Ireland and International Sheep Shearing & Wool Handling Championships and Ireland's biggest sheep, wool and cultural festival

KILKENNY and the south east region is in line for a multi-million euro revenue boost as it hosts the Klik Pour On All Ireland and International Sheep Shearing & Wool Handling Championships as part of Ireland's biggest sheep and wool festival.

The 2011 Sheep & Wool Festival on June 4 and 5 in the Cillín Hill exhibition centre on the edge of Kilkenny city will draw competitors and spectators from all over Ireland and the UK and as far away as Australia, New Zealand and mainland Europe.

Plans are also afoot to host a Young Sheep Farmer Competition and the National Sheep Breeders Association has confirmed that a number of breed societies will host their All Ireland Championships at the event.

The organisers say it will bring 10,000 plus visitors to Kilkenny and the surrounding region on the June Bank Holiday Weekend and will be a massive revenue spinner in tourism terms for the entire South East region and surrounding counties.

The two day festival will also be a major showcase event for trade, craft and food exhibitors in the region as the organisers are offering exhibition space at very affordable rates. The focus will be on helping craft exhibitors and indigenous, artisan producers showcase their goods, without spending a fortune.

It's going to be one of the biggest sheep, wool and cultural festivals ever staged in Ireland, organising committee chairman, Mícheál Nolan, promised. Our festival coincides with the Cat Laughs Comedy Festival and the two events will be mutually beneficial to the entire region, he said.

Together, they add to the buzz, excitement and festival ambiance in Kilkenny and we expect that surrounding counties such as Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, Laois, Tipperary and Kildare will get a significant bounce in terms of revenue spend, hotel and restaurant bookings, bed nights, increased visitor numbers etc, Mr Nolan added.

Given that 2011 is the Year of Craft and Kilkenny is home to the Crafts Council of Ireland and a renowned gourmet hub, craft and food exhibitors from right across Ireland are expected to avail of the opportunity to showcase their products and services and book their slot now on www.sheepshearing2011.ie

Speaking at the launch of details of the event, IFA President John Bryan said: "The Sheep Shearing Championship is a key event and will attract farmers from all over the country. Higher lamb prices and additional direct payments have helped restore confidence to the sheep sector. It is essential that the strong lamb prices in 2010 are continued into 2011."

Chairman of the Irish Sheep Shearers Association, Andrew Corrigan, said: "I wish Clara a very successful All Ireland and International Sheep Shearing and Wool Handling Championships and thank the sponsors and sheep owners for their co-operation in making these Championships possible."

Novartis Animal Health has been involved in 20 out of the last 22 All Ireland Shearing championships and the company is delighted to be supporting one of the biggest dates in the farming calendar once again this year, according to Eugene Smyth, Marketing Manager, Novartis Animal Health.

"The sheep industry is an important part of the fabric of rural Ireland and we are confident that the Kilkenny event is going to be the best yet and will attract a huge audience to see the top Irish and international shearers in action," he said.

The international event is supported by Clik Pour On, Eamon Langton, FBD Insurance, Kilkenny Farm Relief, LEADER and Failte Ireland.

- For further details, log on to www.sheepshearing2011.ie

Ends – Thursday, March 3, 2011

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