

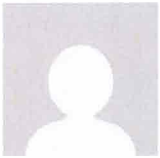
HORSE RACING

Ruidoso Downs moves entire horse racing schedule to Albuquerque due to flood concerns

All-American Futurity set to run at the
Downs at Albuquerque for third straight year



Crews began to repair Ruidoso Downs Racetrack after a flood in 2025. Chancey Bush



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Ruidoso Downs Racetrack will not host horse racing this summer after a government-contracted report found the track is not a sustainable public venue "now or for many years to come" due to flood concerns, the business

announced in a release Monday.

A report from JE Fuller, a civil engineering firm based in Arizona and New Mexico, revealed that moderate rainfall could overwhelm existing and planned drainage improvements, creating dangerous conditions at the popular quarter horse track.

The flooding is a result of wildfires degrading forests in the surrounding mountains, leaving less natural defense against rainfall that accumulates quickly and rushes into streambeds.

Upon learning of the findings from the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management-commissioned report and following up with government agencies last week, track leadership made the “challenging and emotional” decision to move its 49-day race schedule, usually starting in late spring, to the Downs at Albuquerque, citing the safety of track patrons, workers and horses.

“It has now become clear that, even with proposed flood mitigation work done on-site and off-site upstream, Ruidoso Downs Race Track cannot be adequately protected from future flooding,” the release stated. “ ... Continued operations at the current site of Ruidoso Downs Racetrack is not feasible.”

The Downs at Albuquerque previously hosted Ruidoso Downs’ signature Labor Day race, the All-American Futurity, in 2024 and 2025. Known as the richest quarter horse race in the world, the \$3 million futurity was relocated both years after [flash floods engulfed the track and destroyed key race equipment](#) following the South Fork and Salt Fires in 2024.

The track won’t shut down completely. The 2026 New Mexico Bred Sale and the 2026 Super Select Sale will still be held at the Ruidoso Downs sales pavilion. The track’s casino will also remain open.

Despite challenges to reopening horse racing, Ruidoso Downs staff and local officials are eyeing a return next summer.

“The Village of Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs Race Track management, Lincoln County, state officials and community stakeholders are unified in our commitment to bringing championship quarter horse racing back to Ruidoso for the 2027 season,” Ruidoso Mayor Lynn Crawford [stated in a news release Monday](#). “We are already coordinating recovery efforts, identifying funding sources, and developing an aggressive timeline to ensure that every necessary repair is completed well ahead of Memorial Day 2027.”

A message to Crawford’s office from the Journal was not returned. Ruidoso Downs general manager Rick Baugh also did not respond to the Journal’s request for comment.

The JE Fuller report, dated Aug. 5, 2025, [details modeling of three proposed offsite basins and other drainage upgrades at Ruidoso Downs](#). The basins were “not expected to provide meaningful and lasting” flood protection, while the other proposed additions would not eliminate flood risk to the track or surrounding areas.

The planned improvements, the report stated, would likely have limited long-term value due to “very high” construction costs and anticipated maintenance needs.

“(The basins’) effectiveness depends on a highly specific combination of rainfall intensity, duration and post-fire ground conditions,” the report said. “Even if those conditions are met, the basins do not provide meaningful mitigation during larger storm events, as their storage capacity is quickly exceeded.”

When asked about a potential return for horse racing at Ruidoso Downs next summer, New Mexico Racing Commission Executive Director Ismael “Izzy” Trejo said “the crystal ball is never clear” when trying to predict weather conditions — particularly New Mexico’s monsoon season.

“It’s good to have the goals,” he said. “And we hope that they can be maintained. But obviously, we’re not short of the reality of this happening every year from here on out.”

Trejo added he was pleased Albuquerque Downs is able to host Ruidoso Downs’ race schedule in light of the southern track’s “somewhat devastating” decision to not host this summer.

“Not racing in Ruidoso and not having any racetrack step in to run some of these races, it would have been a complete devastation for the horse racing industry here,” he said. “On the one hand, we’re disappointed that we couldn’t get it up and going in Ruidoso, but we understand that’s reality.

“ ... On the flip side, the commission’s very focused on keeping this industry going. Not running in New Mexico at all for the duration of the summer would have been even more devastating than just not running at Ruidoso, so we’re glad that the Downs at Albuquerque has the ability to handle and support the industry in the way that they’re going to this summer.”

Don Cooks, Albuquerque Downs’ president of racing, did not respond to a request for comment from the Journal.

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