Government and Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom)

Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2014

Meeting: Conference Call—August 27, 2014, 7:30 p.m. EDT

Present: Brion Smoker
Erin Egan
Jan Hamby
Joan Clappier
Dr. Pat Long

Board Liaison: Bonnie Potter

Staff Representative: Darby Vannier

Meeting called to order at 7:33 p.m. EDT.

All members introduced themselves for benefit of new members Erin Egan and Jan Hamby. Bonnie and Darby gave background history of GIRCom. Bonnie & Darby gave background of GIRCom.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance (B. Potter, D. Vannier):

1.1.1 At the July AOA meeting the Board established a policy for appointing committee members. Bonnie will send copy of policy to committee members. Darby mentioned that the model used for committee functioning was the way GIRCom has been operating, i.e. the committee researches and discusses issues, then prepares a written recommendation and presents it to the BOD.

1.1.2 The AOA Board meetings are working on policies and integrating the two organizations including the software.

Merger transitions are pretty much completed. National office is moving to a smaller location, smaller office space is required. Most shipping and receiving, which is more space-consuming, has been moved to Lincoln.

Complete merger of all of the functions of ARI and AOBA software is a complex task. A seamless transition for the membership is important. Expected release of the new software is probably November or December.

1.1.3 National Shows

The venue and primary contractors have been signed for Nationals in March.

The Board is planning to separate the Halter Show from the Fleece Show. The goal is for a major fiber-related event each year which would include fleece show, workshops and presentations. Doing workshops during a halter show is less successful because the show-ring activities compete with the classes. It is also becoming clear that there is increasing industry interest in fiber—breeding for superior fiber, processing options, how to make money with fiber, and other topics.

2.0 Industry Related

2.1 Alpaca Livestock Designation Update (B. Potter):

Bonnie has gone through the 2014 Farm Bill. It has similar language to the 2008 bill about livestock, but it does not have the sentence that specifically includes alpacas (and bison and other species) in the definition of "livestock." Bonnie contacted the Secretary of Agriculture to be sure alpacas are still included. The response, received July 21, confirmed that alpacas are still considered livestock. The letter also mentioned that in order to apply for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans, business plan projections must be based on income from alpaca fiber, not sale of breeding stock.

Brion talked to the USDA director in Pennsylvania. He, too, said that business plans must be sustainable and viable projections, not high-end breeding animals prices.

3.0 Health Related

3.1 USAHA Alerts (P. Long, B. Potter):

Vesicular Stomatitis disease has occurred in TX and CO. This has affect movement of animals from those states to other states. 55 ranches in TX have had cases and CO has had a dozen or so cases.

MERS virus continues to be a concern. In 2012 over 800 people were infected and over 200 died. It has been noted that camels had antibodies to this virus 30 years ago, thus it has been around for at least that long. The number of incidents recently has brought MERS visibility to the forefront. Camels and bats have both been implicated as carriers.

EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis)—this has been seen in several states this year including NC, SC, and MS.

WNV—this has been seen in several states. It has been generally warmer this year, thus more mosquitoes.

BVDV in cattle—a study has shown that 0.5% of cattle are persistently infected. There has been mention of how the alpaca industry has done a good job of dealing with this virus.

4.0 Government Related

4.1 USAHA Alerts (P. Long, B. Potter):

There continues to be discussion about use of antibiotics and building anti-biotic resistance. Recent research found that if a lipid-based membrane is breached, it might solve antibiotic resistance problems. High level meetings are schedule to discuss anti-biotic resistance, including at the White House.

CA passed set of bills which ban use of antibiotics for growth and require a prescription for antibiotics. This will impact livestock owners in CA, who have been able to purchase drugs like Penicillin and LA-200 in feed stores.

The Veterinary mobility act was passed and signed by the President. This is critically important to mobile veterinarians because it correct previous legislation which prohibited mobile vets from carrying any drugs other than what was required for cases specifically scheduled. The previous law would have impeded ability of the veterinarians to handle emergencies or unexpected situations.

Pat will once again attend the USAHA meeting, representing the camelid industry. The meeting this year will be in October, Kansas City.

4.2 Development of Talking Points (B. Smoker):

Brion has drafted a set of Talking Points. The purpose is to educate Legislators and to educate and support owners.

Bonnie is reviewing the document and including the Farm Bill Livestock designation information, including where to find the information in the 2014 Farm Bill. Bonnie has document which Fred created with citations of alpacas as livestock in the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. Bonnie has checked them.

The document may include information about end-of-life options and whether there are opportunities for state inspection.

When Brion and Bonnie have completed work on this document they will send it to the entire Committee for review.

4.3 IRS Farm Audits—Article (B. Smoker):

Some farms are getting substantial penalties ($5,000 in at least one case) for not filing 1099's. It gets a bit sticky when a breeding male is co-owned. One farm performs the breeding and collects the breeding fee, but it is split between 2 or more owners.

Brion will bring Erin up to speed on the governmental/audit issues.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Committee Chair/New Members (B. Potter):

The decision was made to give the new members a chance to settle into the Committee before electing a new Committee Chair. In the meantime Bonnie will continue to be acting Chair.

6.0 Approval of Minutes

Pat moved for the minutes to be approved, Joan seconded, and the 6/25/2014 minutes were approved.

7.0 Meeting Wrap

7.1 Review Action Items:

Pat will attend the USAHA Conference.

Brion and Bonnie will continue work on the Talking Points document.

Brion and Erin will discuss Audit Information for our membership.

7.2 Next Meeting:

New member Jan needs a few weeks to clear her schedule for our regular 4th Wednesday meetings, so our next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 1, 2014, at 7:30 p.m. EDT.

7.3 General Discussion:

Darby was pleased with the number of applicants we received for the GIRCom and Fiber committees. We have traditionally had difficulty recruiting people for GIRCom. This time we had 5 applicants for 2 positions on GIRCom and 14 applicants for 7 positions on the Fiber committee. This increased interest in participation may be a good sign for the Association and the industry.

Pat asked Darby how the emergency alert system is working. Darby responded that the system is in place but there have not been any alerts recently. Pat will report this back to ARF.

ARF donations: Over $4,000 has been received thus far this year, plus T-shirt sales which are still selling.

At the AOA face-to-face Board meeting there was discussion about having an ad-hoc committee for alternative alpaca products and end-of-life options. If that committee is formed, GIRCom should work closely with them.

7.4 Adjournment:

Pat made a motion to adjourn and Joan seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m. EDT.