Government & Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom) MINUTES June 8, 2020

Committee Members: Bonnie Potter, Chair
Joan Clappier
Dr. Pat Long
Tom Petersen [absent]
Brion Smoker

Board Liaison: Andy Merriwether

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm ET.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance — Merriwether/Huntley

- Election results have been announced. Pat asked if the number of voters was lower than usual. Answer: No. Observation: Number of participating voters hasn't gone up since making voting free.
- The full National show has been cancelled, but the fleece show will be held July 9-11. Early Bird registration closes June 11 and General registration closes June 25. Small teams will be working with the judges.
- The AOA office was never officially closed – there have been a couple of staff in the office. Robin and Dan are working on a plan to implement social distancing and safety guidelines to fully re-open the office.
- The new Board will probably be seated at the time of the Fleece Show in July.
- PETA has found and filmed an alpaca farm in Peru which handles the animals very roughly during shearing. The voice-over is dramatic and uninformed about how terrified the animals are and that they are throwing up (spitting!). They erroneously claim that all alpacas are abused and harmed during shearing, when their fleece is "stolen" from them to make sweaters. They urge everyone to stop buying alpaca. Apparently some large manufacturers have vowed to stop using alpaca. AOA has already created a response which is about to go out.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts — Long / Potter

- Vesicular stomatitis is still in the news in horses. Alpacas may be susceptible, but no alpaca cases have been reported this year. It started earlier this year than usual and appears to be more widespread, including cases in NM and AZ.
- WNV was first seen in MI a couple of days ago, and more EEE cases have been reported.
- Covid-19 does not appear to be a problem with farm animals.
- There have been reports of anti-microbial resistance, but none directly related to alpacas.

3.0 Unfinished Business

3.1 Alpaca Business Benchmarks/Brion Presentation — Smoker/All

- Bonnie will email some questions to Brion.

3.2 IRS and State Tax Audits - deferred — Smoker

- It is too early for audits.

- Lots of federal money is being released to states and communities for grants to help businesses that are struggling due to Covid-19.

3.3 Agritourism … How We Can Help Our Members — Potter/All

- Bonnie sent a draft eBlast to committee members
- The committee discussed the advisability of sending this eBlast now due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions which impact the safety of agritourism. The motion was made to approve the message, wait until an appropriate time to send it to the BOD for distribution, and include an adequate warning to follow state and local guidelines regarding Covid safety. Motion was made by Joan, seconded by Pat, and passed.
- A suggestion was made that we think of things that people can do to promote their alpaca businesses that don't involve close contact, such as a videos or Zoom alpaca demonstrations. Someone mentioned a video of a person with his llama at a meeting.

3.4 International Transport of Alpacas - deferred — All

4.0 New Business

4.1 PETA Facebook post — Potter

- This was covered in section 1.1 above. AOA has already prepared a response.

4.2 Follow up to eBlast on Vaccinations — Potter

- The eBlast went out on May 26.
- A member asked about including symptom information in such eBlasts. Rather than provide veterinary advice, we discussed including links to useful websites in future eBlasts.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Minutes for approval: (5/11//20) — Potter/Clappier

- Motion to approve the minutes of 5/11/20 was made by Pat, seconded by Joan. Motion was passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap

6.1 Review Action Items — Potter

- Bonnie: send questions to Brion
- Bonnie: work on Covid-19 advice note for the agritourism eBlast.
- Everyone: Think about ways to promote alpaca industry during covid, i.e. without having people on your premises.

6.2 Next Meeting Date: 7/13/2020 — Potter

6.3 Adjournment — Potter

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm ET.