Government and Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom)

Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2017

Meeting: Conference Call—April 19, 2017, 7:30 p.m. EDT

Members: Deborah Bailey
Lynn Boak
Joan Clappier
Dr. Pat Long
Brion Smoker

Board Liaison: Bonnie Potter

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

Meeting called to order at 7:32 p.m. EDT.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance (Huntley, Potter):

- The 2017 National Halter Show in Denver was very successful.
    - There were over 1,000 entries.
    - A lot of great feedback was received.
    - Public attendance was huge. Long lines of people were waiting to have their picture taken with an alpaca. Vendors were thrilled with the amount of public present and resultant product sales.
- Work is proceeding on the National Fleece Conference to be held in July in Sacramento.
- An ad has been placed in the Ag edition of *USA Today* with website information, drawing hundreds of people to the website.
- Election: Nominated candidates have been announced. Petition period ended Monday. Last day to become eligible to vote is May 6. Online voting begins May 22.
- AOA is working on the rollout of this year's website updates.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts (Long, Potter):

- The association is undergoing some changes to organizational structure. Whereas camelids have been included with cattle and horses, the proposal now is to move them to the sheep and goat group. Dr. Long has been offered the co-chair position of that committee. He thinks this makes sense. Alpacas do share some diseases with cattle and horses (e.g. WNV and BVDV) but they have more in common with sheep and goats.
- The USAHA meeting this year will be in San Diego in October.
- A few cases of Equine Herpes Virus have been seen, which can affect alpacas.
- With warming weather, mosquito borne diseases will increase.
- The screw worm seen in FL has been eradicated.
- There is continuing concern about antibiotic resistance. MD passed bill to reduce use of antibiotics in livestock, similar to what has been passed in CA.
- Census: The agriculture census will be done in end of 2017. It is important for alpaca owners to fill out and submit their census information to support that we are a livestock industry. Potter will recommend to the AOA board that they promote filling it out.

3.0 Unfinished Business

3.1 Estate Planning/Preparedness (Boak, Potter, Smoker):

Boak has sent a commented document to the committee and will be sending additional comments shortly. Potter will do an organizational pass on the document and after committee approval, submit it to the AOA Board for approval and request that an AOA staff member do the final formatting.

4.0 New Business:

4.1 Senator Flake Issues: (Potter)

Senator Flake of AZ released a report during the first week of April about the "Tax Racket" of the alpaca industry. He singled out our industry for using tax deductions, implying that we were getting special treatment rather than using the standard business tax options available to all businesses. He had a video and claimed that alpacas were being abused and used for tax write-offs. He misstated facts such as number of alpacas, how they are used for alpaca products, etc.

AOA was notified of this story the day before it went out in the media. The AOA Executive Director and AOA PR Specialist worked with AZ breeders and media contacts to put out an immediate, strong response. The AOA response appears to have gotten more media coverage than Flake's report. Potter was requested to send a copy of the response to committee members in case they are asked about it.

4.2 MA Senate Bill 490—Wild and Exotic animal performance prohibition (Potter):

The AOA Executive Director heard about this bill and informed Potter so that GIRCom could discuss it. Potter has sent the committee a link to the bill. The bill is to protect all "wild and exotic" [W&E] animals from poor treatment and to protect the public from the animals. Non W&E animals include pets such as cats, dogs, etc., and farm animals including cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, etc. W&E is defined as including but not limited to giraffes, camels, llamas and many other species such as crocodiles, rhinos, and others. There are exemptions for some organizations, zoos, university research, etc. However fairs, shows, private property (e.g. ranches/farms) are not exempt from the legislation.

It is expected that since llamas are included, alpacas are also at risk of inclusion. This could potentially result in legal action against owners who take animals to shows, fairs, and even "exhibit" their alpacas to visitors on their own private property. The industry—and especially owners in MA and the New England affiliates, should coordinate quick and strong opposition to this Bill.

Clearly this is completely unreasonable and the legislature must be convinced not to make such a blanket statement which might define alpacas as Wild and Exotic when they are farm animals.

Bailey knows members of MA/New England alpaca organizations and shows and will contact some of them. The University of Massachusetts has a camelid program.

Potter will urge AOA to contact all MA members to lobby against the bill. The USDA classifies alpacas as livestock, and alpacas have been domesticated livestock in South America for thousands of years.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Potter):

5.1 Approval of the minutes of 3/15/17. Motion was made by Smoker and seconded by Long. Motion passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap:

6.1 Review Action Items (Potter):

- Boak: send additional comments to Potter about estate planning.
- Potter: incorporate Boak's additional information and get document ready for an AOA staff person to do final formatting.
- Potter: contact AOA board with MA bill information. Recommend contacting all MA members to mount serious effort to defeat this bill.
- Potter: send AOA response to Flake article to GIRCom committee.

6.2 Next Meeting (Potter):

Third Wednesday, May 17, 2017.

6.3 Adjournment (Potter):

Motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Long, seconded by Clappier. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m. EDT.