Government and Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom)

Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2017

Meeting: Conference Call—December 12, 2017, 7:30 p.m. EST

Members: Deborah Bailey (absent)
Joan Clappier
Dr. Pat Long
Bonnie Potter—Chair
Brion Smoker

Board Liaison: Andy Merriwether

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

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

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance (Huntley, Merriwether):

- The Board has agreed on the budget for 2018. Income from memberships, shows, etc., has been down and expenses are being carefully managed.
- Membership renewal is open. We are on target with where we were at this point last year.
- The telephone answering system offers a lot of information about activities and resources.
- AOA is offering advertising packages for the entire year as an alternative to buying individual opportunities as they come up throughout the year.
- The recorded alpaca videos that came from the American Farmer show are providing us with good marketing materials. The 9-minute segment from that show plus several versions of “Feel the Difference” ads are available on the AOA website. Members are encouraged to use the information as part of their own marketing programs, either by sharing on social media or providing links from their own websites.
- Angela, AOA’s new Event Organizer, is currently in Nashville, Tennessee, working out details for the 2018 fiber show. The show, renamed “Natural Fiber Extravaganza,” will have a broader scope. AOA would like to partner with other fiber industries and with manufacturers. There should be significant vendor opportunities.
- At the recent Affiliate Conference Call, there was discussion and questions about the Electronic Logging Device (ELD) regulations.
- Andy reported that there was no response to the eblast that was sent out soliciting new members for a couple of committees, including GIRCom. Patty Hasselbring will work on wording another eblast to stimulate greater interest and get some applicants.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts (Long, Potter):

- USAHA information is available on the website.
- In November, First Responder training for livestock was held in Napa Valley, CA.
- Animal disease traceability is getting a bit more press, although for now it is focused primarily on the species that are high priority to USDA such as cattle, chickens, sheep, and hogs. There is not much emphasis (yet) on camelids.
- Maryland has a new law going into effect in 2018 which prohibits LARGE farms from using antibiotic-containing feeds for their livestock.
- Antibiotic use in livestock is down 10% this year. Use of medically important antibiotics (those used in human and animal treatment) are down 14%. The livestock reported is primarily cattle.

- An article about evacuated animals at the fairgrounds in the Ventura fire (currently raging in southern CA) mentioned a few alpacas and llamas among the evacuees. This once again brings up the concern that people at evacuation centers are typically knowledgeable about “mainstream” livestock but often not about camelids.

3.0 Unfinished Business

3.1 Estate Planning/Preparedness (Merriwether, Potter):

- The document is being reviewed by the Board. Andy will give us status updates as they become available.

3.2 Alpaca Business Benchmarks (Smoker, All):

- We all still feel this is a useful tool for the AOA members.
- We need to keep getting more data. There may be more farm data forthcoming after the first of the year when people compile data for their taxes.
- There was general discussion about making money off the fiber.
    - One way farms make profit is by purchasing products from Peru and reselling.
    - Considerations for profiting from your own fiber
        - Animal-to-end product includes Shearing, Skirting/Sorting, Washing, Spinning, sometimes Dying, and creating end products (knit, crochet, weave, felt, etc.). The more of these steps the farmer does himself, the less money he spends. It is a trade-off between dollars spent and labor invested.
        - Having yarn made in a mill for individual animals or even batched fiber from a small farm is expensive. Pooling fiber with other farms can bring costs down per pound by producing enough poundage in a run to use some of the larger mills. The fiber batches must be sorted and graded for consistency to produce good quality yarn.
    - Price that can be charged for hand-made items varies with the geographic location and/or type of venue.
    - A broader clientele can be reached via outlets such as Etsy.

3.3 Education of State/County Officials about Camelids (Potter):

- Bonnie is working on a white paper to consolidate ideas for ensuring that officials are knowledgeable about camelids when they are considering legislation that will affect our animals.

4.0 New Business:

4.1 Electronic Logging Device (ELD) Mandate and Impact on Members (Potter):

- We all received copies of an AQHA (American Quarter Horse Association) report about ELD and a write-up from an AOA member who presented some information about “commercial” status and regulations for transporting livestock. New regulations are calling for a 14-hour work period for truckers, during which they can only be driving 11 hours. Then they must take a complete break for 10 hours.
- Bonnie has uncovered the following from some quick research:
    - Truckers are protesting the new regulations with a work slowdown.
    - There are reports (including from AQHA) that there may be a 3-month delay for livestock haulers.
    - There might be discussion in both the House and Senate about exemptions or some relief for truckers transporting livestock. 10 hours standing time when hauling livestock is typically not in the best interests of the animals.
- Brion talked to the Penske truck leasing company that he has worked with. Comments from that source included
    - Transporting within 150 mile radius of your farm is exempt from regulations.
    - You are exempt from this regulation under Ag rules if you are not transporting more than 8 days in a 30 day period.
- Brion forwarded a link to the Committee with a layman-readable description of the regulation. GIRCom can pass this on to the AOA membership and help alert members about the ELD regulations. This is not an area where AOA will be able to provide specific legal recommendations to members.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Clappier, Potter):

5.1 Minutes for approval: 11/13/17

- Pat moved that the minutes be accepted and Joan seconded the motion. Motion passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap:

6.1 Review Action Items (Potter):

- Bonnie: Produce a draft white paper about educating government entities about camelids.
- Committee: Continue working on the Benchmarks.
- Bonnie: Draft something about ELD.
- Andy: Follow up with Southern CA BVDV case.
- Andy: Keep Committee informed of status of the Estate Planning document.

6.2 Next Meeting Date will be 1/8/2018 (Potter):

6.3 Adjournment (Potter):

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m. EST.