Government & Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom) MINUTES September 14, 2020

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

Board Liaison: Wendy Dittbrenner

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm ET.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 Welcome Wendy — All

- Wendy Dittbrenner is our new representative from the Board of Directors. She told us some of her background, including raising alpacas in northern Arizona for 20 years. A major concern of hers is that too many people getting alpacas don't learn about proper care for keeping alpacas. Each Committee member introduced themselves to Wendy.

1.2 AOA News of Importance — Dittbrenner/Huntley

- The AOA website has been reworked to create a "tools" page to make it easier for members to find useful information, including documents created by GIRCom.
- NAFD will be the end of month, September 26-27. The office has been getting inquiries about ideas of what they can do during Covid restrictions. AOA has sent an eblast to members with a very good list of suggestions. Some members have mentioned things they have done such as having visitors by appointment only, limiting visits to small groups, and using pasture rotation to prevent groups from intermingling or visiting the same spot in quick succession. The office has also received some pushback from members who felt they were being pushed to open their farms during the pandemic.
- The recent GIRCom documents have been sent to the membership.
- AOA has heard stories of alpaca owners helping other owners with evacuations. Committee members also shared similar stories of people showing up with transport vehicles to move animals for others.
- The 2021 stock show scheduled to be held in Denver has been cancelled until 2022. That is the same venue where AOA is planning to have our 2021 National show. The office does not yet know if that plan is feasible, so they are working on a couple of alternate plans.
- Wendy forwarded to GIRCom an excellent USDA document Shauna had sent to the BOD. It addresses disaster preparedness for livestock owners and contains lots of good information and links to useful websites. The Committee recommended that it be sent to the entire membership.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts/Conference — Long / Potter

- Vesicular Stomatitis reports have finally diminished in September.
- There have been more reports than last year of encephalitis transmitted by mosquitos.
- There has been a shift in the most commonly reported type of BVDV cattle. Type 1b is now more commonly reported in cattle. This is the type that was most commonly reported in alpacas in the past. It is unclear how this may affect incidence in alpacas in the future.
- The annual USAHA meeting will be virtual this year rather than the planned in-person meeting in Knoxville. One of the proposed topics will be how Canada and Alaska are dealing with concerns about sheep, goats and camelids spreading disease to wild bighorn sheep (which might include a ban on llama-packing).

- WA has temporarily waived import paperwork requirements for animal transport because some animals are being transported over the border from Oregon due to the multitude of large wildfires.

Unfinished Business

3.1 Alpaca Business Benchmarks/Brion Presentation — Potter/Smoker

- Bonnie and Brion will discuss this.

3.2 IRS and State Tax Audits - deferred — Smoker

- Brion says that audit activity is generally being put off to avoid face-to-face meetings during the pandemic.

3.3 Agritourism … eBlast follow-up — Potter

- It was sent to the membership on 7/23. The office has not received any questions recently.

3.4 International Transport of Alpacas/Info for website - deferred — Potter

4.0 New Business

4.1 Ideas for promoting Alpaca Industry during Covid — All

- AOA has just put out an excellent document on this topic, in preparation for NAFD. Thus GIRCom is tabling this topic for now.

4.2 Sustainable Agriculture/Assistance with Grants — Smoker

- Brion says there is a lot of money available for grants and loans from the FDA. The information changes quickly, so Brion will review sources to get updated information, then send it to Bonnie for a possible eblast to the membership.

4.3 September is National Preparedness Month — All

- June 11 was the start of fire season and it has been worse than normal. Hurricanes are also occurring.
- AOA recently sent a “Members Helping Members” eblast and the organization is trying to collect data to connect alpaca owners in need of help with those offering assistance.
- We need to keep reminding people that it is important to microchip their alpacas even if they don’t show them … and ***be sure*** to record the chip numbers in their herd data on the website. This will facilitate the return of their animals in the event they are separated from their animals during an emergency.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Minutes for approval: (7/13/20) — Clappier

- Motion to approve the minutes of 7/13/20 was made by Pat seconded by Joan. Motion was passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap

6.1 Review Action Items — Potter

- Brion: send link to Bonnie of FDA grant/loan resources
- Wendy: recommend to the board that Shauna’s USDA document be sent to members
- Bonnie: Talk to Brion about Alpaca Business Benchmarks
- Dan: have De add people to the list for receiving USAHA alerts. (Wendy, Tom, and any others on the committee who are interested.)

6.2 Next Meeting Date: 10/12/2020 — Potter

6.3 Adjournment — Potter

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm ET.