

Maine Alpaca Association
Membership Meeting
Saturday, March 27, 2010
Great Wall Restaurant, Augusta, ME

Present: Mike and Jacquie Archer (guests), Dawn Brooker, Joyce DeFisher (guest), Pam Drew, Abby Fitzgerald, Geri Gabriel, Pam Harwood, Pat and Lisa Houde, Paula Ickeringill, Cindy Kilgore (guest), Red Laliberte, Jill McElderry-Maxwell, Steffi McKeith, Cindy Mingle, Marty Sarah Moore, Pat Perry, Claudia and Ken Raessler, Ginny Rebar, Alan and Linda Russo, Matt Townsend, Ricki Waltz, Bruce Weymouth and Karen Woods

Steffi McKeith brought her vision for the new MAA trade show booth with her and made it available for inspection before lunch. She proposed that members manning the booth be responsible for displaying their own product as an added incentive to boost volunteerism. A motion was made to accept the booth for use by the group. It was seconded and the vote for approval was unanimous.

The costs for the booth totaled approximately \$245; the BOD has authorized repayment. The membership at the meeting requested that Steffi investigate having a combination sign and photo laminated to serve as the centerpiece of the booth design.

The formal meeting was brought to order over lunch at approximately 11:45.

- I. The secretary (Jill McElderry-Maxwell) requested a motion to approve the last meeting minutes. It was seconded and approved.
- II. The treasurer (Pam Drew) reported that MAA has a total of 57 member farms as of the date of the meeting. Minor activity was discussed at the meeting, and the treasurer's report is hereby appended to and included in these minutes. A motion was made to approve the treasurer's report. The motion was seconded and approved.
- III. The president (Dawn Brooker) announced that the next two meeting dates will be Sunday, June 27, 2010 and Sunday September 12, 2010.
- IV. Paula Ickeringill presented the Education Committee report for Ursula Munro, who has agreed to serve as chair. The committee would like to propose moving some speakers to before the meeting, particularly those with tight time constraints. The committee is always looking for input on possible speakers and/or topics for upcoming meetings. Right now, they are considering Matt Randall, the state compliance officer, and Chip Ridke, who would speak on import/export regulations to Canada.

The Education Committee has decided to put the annual education seminar on hiatus in 2010, given moderate attendance the past several years, as well as the

increase in on farm educational events here in Maine. New ideas for educational opportunities are being brainstormed and might include farm tours, smaller workshops and other networking opportunities.

- V. Pam Harwood presented the Marketing Committee report. A total of \$483 worth of product was donated by seven farms to the MPBN Auction. MAA will be included in the booklet listing auction items, and should receive good publicity from the donations. Many thanks to those farms that contributed. The Committee is beginning to brainstorm this year's approach to September's Open Farm Days.
- VI. Jill McElderry-Maxwell presented the Website Committee report. The committee consists of Pam Harwood, Matt Townsend, Tami Wayboer and herself; there is currently no formal chair. The group has finished a survey of approximately two dozen member organization websites, cataloguing what they offer members. A survey requesting member input on options for the new MAA website will be designed and offered shortly. Based on those recommendations, the group will brainstorm mockups of the site and begin soliciting bids. It is the group's goal to have the new website up and running by September.
- VII. Karen Woods presented the Fundraising Committee report on behalf of Marcia McDonald. MAA will be holding a raffle at the NELE event, and Poulin Grains is being approached in the hope that they would consider donating a gift certificate. The purchase of a Home Depot gift certificate is also being considered, since we want the prize to appeal to the farming community that attends NELE.
- VIII. Ricki Waltz brought us up to date on NELE happenings and noted that the other groups participating appreciate MAA's presence at the event. The alpacas will be located on the outside edge of the Pulling Ring, so that there will be no other livestock walking past our area. MAA will have a manned informational booth in the Path of Distinction with other livestock organizations.

There are at least six farms committed to holding a pen sale, and a series of demonstrations has been lined up to be held throughout the event. The cost is \$50 for a combined animal/display stall, or \$75 for a vendor stall in the commercial tent. Participants must bring their own panels, as the sheep and goat panels are too short to safely contain alpacas. Farms may participate for one, two or all three days of the event, and animals should be brought home each evening.

It has been requested that MAA members put up posters advertising the event in their local feed and similar stores. The NELE website has a link to the MAA website, and we will reciprocate upon receiving the logo from NELE.

- IX. Karen Woods presented a report on the Fiber Frolic, which last year saw over 2,000 attendees. There are 72 vendors for 2010 so far. Fiber product sold at the Frolic should be made from your fiber, but does not have to be processed start to

finish on your own farm. Coop products are acceptable if you contributed fiber to that cooperative. Other fiber related products such as needles, wheels, dyes, books, etc. are also permitted. Preference will be given to vendors with Maine made products first.

The Frolic already meets most requirements to be a licensed Agricultural Fair (these fairs receive State promotion). The Frolic must now give away a minimum of \$750 in prize money each year for the next three years to qualify; there are already several events with cash prizes and more will be added.

This year there will be a contest to design next year's t-shirt, and the "Make It with Maine Fiber" contest will be held at the Frolic.

Nicole Carter has been submitting press releases to her 100+ contact list for the media and more advertising will be done.

- X. The revised guidelines for use of the Yahoo! group were presented by Jill McElderry-Maxwell. The detailed findings will be sent separately to the Yahoo! group this week, but in brief, the membership clearly wants to be able to post articles about member farms and topics in agriculture that are relevant to Maine alpaca farming. The restriction on posting published articles has been lifted, although unpublished press releases may not be posted to the group. Advertising educational events at member farms or that are of interest to member farms is also allowed. Most of the other items discussed on the survey will be relegated to the classifieds section of the website, e.g., posting equipment for sale, etc.

The membership agreed that to refrain from religious or political discussions on the group, and to maintain standards of civil discourse. The BOD hopes to encourage the use of the group for discussions of alpaca husbandry, fiber use, etc.

The BOD asks the membership to police themselves and follow the rules, but will step in to privately notify those breaking the rules. Repeat offenders will need to have their posts manually approved by a group moderator.

- XI. Dawn Brooker presented a proposal to investigate bulk buying of feeds by MAA members. She has had an initial positive response from her Poulin distributor. A motion was made to survey the membership regarding what products are used, and how far members would be willing to drive to pick up items in bulk. The motion was seconded and approved. A survey regarding bulk buying will be worked up and presented to the membership shortly.
- XII. It was decided that classified ads will be offered free for the next six months on the MAA website in order to jump start that portion of the website. The BOD will discuss advertising rates beyond this period.

XIII. A motion was made to table the discussion of collaborative fiber projects to the next meeting due to Nicole Carter's absence. The motion was seconded and approved.

Dr. Matthew Townsend, DVM, spoke following the members meeting. He presented several topics of interest from his MAA sponsored trip to the UC Davis Camelid Conference earlier this year.

