



Maine Alpaca Association
Membership Meeting
June 12th, 2011
Misty Acres Alpaca Farm

The Maine Alpaca Association met at the home of Red and Connie Laliberte, Misty Acres Alpaca Farm, in Sidney, Maine. The group extends a sincere thank you to the Lalibertes for providing the meeting space.

Present: Jeannine Anderson, Bear and Lois Brace, Jennifer Caldwell-Jeans, Nicole and Greg Carter, Tony Cortigene, Phyllis Dickey, Pam Drew, Abby Fitzgerald, Carol and John Furman, Sally Groene, Pam Harwood, Paula Ickeringill, Red and Connie LaLiberte, Sheila McDonough, Jill McElderry-Maxwell, William and Ann Morgan, Theresa Morin, Pat Perry, Claudia Raessler, Darlene Reardon, Virginia Rebar, Laila Roukounakis, Alan Russo, Matt Townsend, Ricki Waltz, Tami Wayboer, Bob Weintraub, and Karen Woods

- I. The meeting was called to order at approximately 11:00 AM. Robin Fowler, President of the MAA Board, welcomed the large group of attendees and briefly reviewed group meeting norms. Members introduced themselves, after which several members presented brief updates on ongoing projects.
 - a. Bob Weintraub invited the membership to a lobster fest at Cloud Hollow Farm on July 30. He also outlined the concept of an IAO alpaca show, and expressed interest in hosting a seminar and/or fleece show based on IAO rules. Bob is interested in growing and supporting a textile manufacturing base in Maine.
 - b. Ricki Waltz is available for cria shearing. She will also be participating in the Light Livestock Equipment shearing competition later in June.
 - c. Tami Wayboer will be the Cumberland Fair alpaca presence organizer again this year. She noted that the alpacas are well received and supported, and anyone with interest in participating should contact her directly.
 - d. Cindy Mingle is the point person for the alpaca presence at the Fryeburg Fair.
 - e. A number of members expressed an interest in increasing MAA's presence on the various state websites dedicated to agriculture.
 - f. Paula Ickeringill asked the membership to consider timing the late summer/fall MAA meeting to coincide with the annual NEABA picnic, which she is hosting in Kittery.
 - g. Claudia Raessler discussed the progress of the Maine Alpaca Blanket project to

which many farms have already contributed. A large number of fleeces were brought to the meeting as well. A 1000 pound bale must be completed by August 15 for the project to come to fruition. Farms that contribute fleece will receive credit towards the purchase of four blankets at whole sale cost, projected to be approximately \$50. The goal is to produce 200, 5' x 6' high quality throws.

- II. Robin Fowler then discussed the strengths and weaknesses faced by MAA at the current time, and how to organize the association to take advantage of the first and minimize the second.
- a. MAA is fortunate to have a diverse array of talents within the membership. Members enjoy spending time socializing with one another and learning from each other.
 - b. MAA members are also pressed for time, and have a long wish list of items they would like to see the group accomplish. Only a small group regularly volunteers to help with MAA projects.

Robin stressed the need for every member to contribute small amounts of time, as critical needs arise. Focus groups will be small and nimble, responding to immediate needs and concentrating on accomplishing reasonable tasks. If members see a need, they should bring it to the appropriate Focus Group's attention, and help them to meet it.

- III. After a break for a bagged lunch and socializing, the meeting broke into two groups and enjoyed presentations on fiber by several members.
- a. Pam Drew outlined a number of resources for putting fiber into production, including mills, coops, etc. This is a great list of options many farms have used one or more of the services and can offer their feedback to membership. This is where you can use the Yahoo Group to share ideas and experiences.
 - b. Karen Woods demonstrated a cradle picker and drum carder and answered questions about hand processing alpaca fiber. This was a great visual presentation showing how we can all get involved with our fiber using these very manageable pieces of equipment. There was some discussion around getting a few farms to purchase some equipment as a group to save on costs.
 - c. Pam Harwood gave a presentation on fiber sorting, grading and the importance of pairing the right fiber for the right end product. She explains how fleeces are sorted according to **color, length and fineness or "grade"** in order to provide the most uniform fiber possible for processing at its highest and best use. Since most fleeces contain a variety of lengths, colors and grades, many producers only use the best blanket fiber, throwing away as much as 30-40% of their annual harvest. You can learn much more on this subject by visiting her website at www.longwoodsalpacas.com.
 - d. Connie LaLiberte spoke on her experience with organizing a mill run of private label socks, as well as other opportunities for using fiber. She reminded all of us

how important it is that we do something with our fiber each year, even if it's to give it to another farm rather than letting it sit in bags and lose its quality for use.

All four presenters did an outstanding job sharing their experiences with the group! We look forward to more of our members participating in our mini-workshops at future meetings.

- IV We closed the meeting with several members sharing their feedback on the day's meeting as well as completing meeting feedback sheets. Connie and Red gave a tour of their farm and lovely new home.

Special thanks to those who drove a long distance to attend and to everyone for their great level of participation.

The next meeting will be held Sunday, September 18th (time to be announced at a later date) at **Sea Hill Farm**

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