

MAA e-Newsletter

June 2007

Sent via the Yahoo group as text html from the Board of Directors

Greetings and Happy Spring to all! The show season is underway, shears have been sharpened, skirting tables set up, crias are coming, and festivals and fairs are eagerly anticipated. This is a busy and exciting time of year.

1. Membership meetings

The March membership meeting was a resounding success! Many thanks to the Education Committee for inviting Rick Kersbergen of the Maine Cooperative Extension Service to speak about forages appropriate for alpacas in our climate. Certainly was a timely topic, and brought in great attendance.

Speaking of attendance, you may have noticed that the Augusta Civic Center staff was scurrying to set up 2 more tables for us. We were expecting about 30 for lunch and 48 showed up. We were delighted to see such wonderful attendance, but hope you'll understand better why it is so important to reply to Raini (with a check) to secure your place at the table. We can accommodate 2-3 extras with no problem, but if this meeting had been on Sunday, with no other meetings going on, 15+ of you wouldn't have been able to eat. Also, we are charged \$3 more per person for those above the guaranteed amount. Currently that extra fee has been coming out of the budget rather than from the extra folks.

2. By-laws Changes Approved Unanimously

Despite the bump in attendance at the last meeting, we didn't have enough FARMS represented for a quorum to vote on the proposed by-laws changes. Ballots were mailed out and after a couple of pleas, we did get enough returned. 34 ballots received as of 5/25/07. 34 Approve the changes to the bylaws; 0 Disapproved. The motion carries. The ballots will be kept in the MAA records in case anyone ever wants to inspect them.

Many thanks to **Claudia Raessler, Dan Mingle, and Pamela Drew** for all the time you devoted to putting together the draft.

3. A reminder: Your input on a Committee is needed

In order for our committees to remain the dynamic entities they are, and to keep the creative juices flowing, we encourage each member to sign up for a committee. You might not be able to attend all committee meetings, but your voice will be heard in online discussions. Not sure what you can contribute because you are "too new" to alpacas? Join a committee, listen, learn, and you'll be amazed at how quickly your past "outside" experience will help ideas to flow!

Education: Dawn Brooker, chair

The Education Committee is responsible for lining up guest speakers at MAA's 4 membership meetings, as well as organizing our annual Education Seminar.

Fiber Frolic: Al Maloney/Nancy Williams/Raini Perry, co-chairs

In 2007, MAA assumed stewardship of this small but growing annual fiber festival. MAA is working closely with the llama, goat, sheep, and bunny people to celebrate all things "Fiber" in the State of Maine.

Fundraising (Including Vet Fund): Marcia MacDonald, chair

The Fundraising Committee is critical to the continued fiscal health of our organization! Silent Auctions and raffles have added many thousands of dollars to MAA's coffers. We need to keep up the good work!

SMART (State of Maine Animal Response Team) Committee: Pamela Harwood, chair

Disasters come in many forms: fire, flood, ice, snow, and wind to name only a few. This dormant committee will help put together a list of owners and breeders who have trailers, extra quarantine/pen/pasture space, feed, halters, etc in case of emergency. The list should

be updated annually, and MAA members will be encouraged to create their own emergency response plans. This is a good time to review (or initiate) your own disaster preparedness plan. Go to http://www.avma.org/disaster/state_resources/me.asp for information about Maine's Animal disaster plans and resources. Now is the time to think about how to transport, shelter, and/or feed your livestock in the event disaster strikes.

Website/Marketing: Cindy Lavan/AI Maloney, co-chairs

The Website/Marketing Committee is responsible for putting MAA's best foot forward through our website as well as local, regional, and national advertising and promotion, i.e. MAA's Open Farm Weekends, newspaper and magazine ads, show sponsorships, etc.

4. It's All About the Fiber

Now is the time to figure out what to do with all those glorious fleeces that your alpacas have donated. Fiber testing through Yocum-McColl or Alpaca Consulting Services Inc. will help you decide the highest and best use of your fiber, as well as track the effectiveness of your breeding and nutrition decisions. Fiber under 25 microns with no more than 3% over 30 microns won't have the "prickle" most people associate with wool – it is ideal for fine knitting yarn, and commands a premium price in farm stores, at the farmers market, and in Local Yarn Shops. Stronger yarns make wonderful knitting and felting yarns for outer garments – even if it's too scratchy to be worn next to the skin, it's ideal for sweaters, vests, hats, scarves, and felted items like slippers and handbags. Alpaca takes dye beautifully, and may be blended with wool, mohair, silk, and other natural fibers to great effect. Even the strongest fiber, as long as it's over 2 inches, may be spun into rug yarn. Speak to your local miller for more ideas.

Those who don't have the means to process or sell yarn are encouraged to join the Alpaca Fiber Co-op of North America. You'll still need to skirt your fiber, but once you ship it to AFCNA, it is sorted, graded, scoured and processed into yarn and finished goods available to you at wholesale prices and sold to the general public at retail prices.

If you aren't sure about how to properly skirt your fleeces, for show or for processing, keep your eyes out for seminars offered locally. The better you prepare your fleece for processing, the lower your overall cost as it won't have to be re-washed, re-carded, or put through a dehairer. Most mills have scouring facilities, but it's a good idea, especially for smaller farms, to learn how to wash alpaca fiber to further cut processing costs.

5. AOBA's National Conference

Many Maine farms brought their best alpacas to AOBA's National Conference in Louisville, KY earlier this month, and Maine alpacas were well represented among the ranks of ribbon winners. Did you also know that two MAA members were invited to speak at the conference? **Nancy Durst** spoke about Farming with Fiber Boys, and **Claudia Raessler** spoke about Contracts.

6. CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS –

Great ways to learn, have fun, and make friends!

Some events require pre-registration so check for details via the contact information provided.

June 9, 2007 MAINE ALPACA ASSOCIATION'S MEMBERSHIP MEETING – at the Fiber Frolic (see below), the meeting will start at 4:15pm, after the Frolic closes for the day and will only consist of the business meeting portion. We would like to have the members enjoy what the Frolic has to offer during the day before the meeting and then meet after to wrap up the day. There will be no need to RSVP, but sign-in at the gate will be required to get in free and meeting attendance expected. We will send out an agenda a few days before the meeting.

June 9-10, 2007, MAINE FIBER FROLIC – Windsor Fair Grounds, Windsor, ME. This has always been a big event for MAA, but it is even more so now that MAA has taken over the reins from the Maine Llama Association. Go to www.fiberfrolic.com for more information .

Sunday July 22, 2007 – Maine Open Farm Day – Go to
http://www.getrealmaine.com/visit/open_farm_day.html for details

Saturday/Sunday, September 29/30 – National Alpaca Farm Day – go to
<http://www.nationalalpacaфарmday.com> to register your farm.

Newsletter ideas, articles, comments, etc. please send to pdh@longwoodsapacas.com .
Thanks for your time and support of MAA!!!