

MAA e-Newsletter

November 2007

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

1. Membership meetings

Minutes for the June Membership meeting are posted on the website. The next membership meeting is scheduled for **1:00 PM on Sunday, December 2nd** at the Great Wall Buffet in Augusta. (See details below under Upcoming Events). Buffet will open at 12:45.

Please remember it is important to RSVP to Raini (with \$10 payment by 11/28) to secure your place at the table. We can accommodate 2-3 extras with no problem, but if future meetings are as well-attended as the meeting in March, we'll need to bring in extra tables/chairs.

2. Membership Renewal

Look for your membership renewal form in the mail very soon. All members whose renewal is in by or at the Dec 2nd membership meeting will qualify for a drawing. The winner will receive one free month of a Banner Ad on the MAA website Home Page. Drawing will be at the meeting. You do not need to be present to win (but we hope you are!).

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 when you renew your MAA membership. 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/Al 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

We have a couple of new articles about Fiber on the website. Please submit your ideas or articles to Pam Harwood for inclusion on this new page.

5. Affiliate Status

Now that our by-laws have been amended, MAA is in the process of applying for status as an Affiliate Organization of AOBA.

6. Rabies Vaccination – Pamela Harwood

In an effort to reduce vet visit expenses this year, I decided (after conferring with a number of other breeders) to give my herd its rabies vaccinations, as I do CD & T and other injections. The reasoning was that since rabies is off-label for alpacas and it isn't a required vaccination that must be documented by a veterinarian, it was OK for me to order the vaccine, have it sent to a relative in Massachusetts, and give the vaccine myself.

All went well until last Sunday, when one of my alpacas suffered a reaction to the vaccine within 15 minutes. I have Epinephrine on hand, which my vet had previously told me how much (and how) to give. When I spoke with the vet, she also recommended Banamine and a lot of TLC. By the end of the day, my alpaca was feeling like himself, though he did choke on his grain that evening.

I learned the following from this experience:

1. Just because I CAN do something (i.e. give injections), doesn't necessarily mean I SHOULD.
2. The brand of vaccine I used, even though it is a "killed virus", is considered by many camelid vets, including Dr. Pugh, to be "hot". It is not unusual for adverse reactions to occur. These vets prefer the Imrab rabies vaccine (also a killed virus vaccine).
3. Epinephrine is a powerful drug. There is a fine line between safe and lethal doses. In addition, it should not be given without supportive care prescribed by your veterinarian.
4. Rabies is spread in saliva (e.g. spit). If there is a question that one of your alpacas is rabid, the State authorities will accept a veterinarian's documentation of that alpaca's vaccination. They may require the alpaca be quarantined at owner's expense, but they won't demand that it be euthanized so it can be tested, as they would if they only have the owner's assertion that the alpaca was vaccinated.
5. Rabies is relatively new to Maine, however it was recently diagnosed in a local llama, and its pasture-mate was also put down as a precaution. The owner didn't have a vet's documentation that it had been vaccinated. It's quite possible unvaccinated alpacas could contract rabies, so please talk to your vet about whether and how often your herd should be vaccinated.
6. In the future, our vet will administer rabies vaccines, and I have thrown out the remaining doses of the "hot" vaccine. The money I would have saved on vet visits isn't worth the slim possibility that one or more of my alpacas could be euthanized because their vaccinations weren't administered by a veterinarian.

7. AlpacaWatch Alert

Since mid-summer, an upper respiratory virus has spread across the country. While most affected alpacas get a runny nose for a few days, 50+ have succumbed to secondary problems such as pneumonia. Janet Morrow of Mountain Ash Farm in Presque Isle has posted a website at www.alpacawatch.com with more information about this virus. Vets and owners from across the country are using this site as a reference, and new information is added as it becomes available.

Currently, there is no system to alert alpaca breeders of a potential problem other than word of mouth and through the various e-lists on Yahoo. If you sign up for AlpacaWatch Alerts, your contact information will be used for no other purpose than to alert you of important news and health issues relating to the alpaca industry.

8. Maine Grass Farmers Network (MGFN)

Alpaca farms that have enough acreage for harvesting hay may want to join the Maine Grass Farmers Network. MGFN is now a membership organization with a requirement that members pay dues, which are \$25 per calendar year. Payments should be made out to "MGFN" and sent to Diane Schivera, MGFN, PO Box 170, Unity, ME 04988. **Please call Diane with questions: (207) 568-4142.** Newsletters, pasture walks, seminars, and conferences which pertain to grass farming in Maine are among the benefits of membership in this organization.

9. News from The Common Ground Fair Fleece Tent

2006			2007		
Fiber	# "units" sold	Pounds sold (approx.)	Fiber	# "units" sold	Pounds sold (approx.)
Alpaca	2	7.25	Alpaca	19	43.50
Angora	29	3.75	Angora	24	3.00
Cashmere	8	0.50	Cashmere	4	0.60
Llama	0	0.00	Llama	0	0.00
Mohair	10	28.25	Mohair	12	39.00
Wool	177	899.50	Wool	199	955.50
TOTALS	226	939.35	TOTALS	258	1,041.50
Total number of growers participating: 25			Total number of growers participating: 47		
Total sales: \$9,376.11			Total sales: \$10,101.53		

While wool is still the biggest seller by far, alpaca is now the second best seller. Also, the wool is sold "in the grease", therefore it will lose half to 2/3 of it's weight in washing, whereas raw alpaca doesn't lose much in washing – say 5-10%. We have some good growth potential at the Fiber Frolic and Common Ground Fair – it's just a question of getting the word out. Skirted fiber sells the best, and if you have neck fiber that is as good as the blanket, that may be sold, too.

10. MAA's Annual Education Seminar with Guest Speaker Ahmed Tibary, DVM was well attended by both breeders and veterinarians. Many thanks to the Education Committee for all the time they put in to make this happen. The veterinarians who attended will receive 7 Continuing Education Units. In addition, MAA hosted a dinner following the seminar for Dr. Tibary and our veterinarians. Often, these informal dinners with the guest speaker can be as informative as the seminar.

11. 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.

Sunday, December 2, 2007 at 1:00 PM (buffet open at 12:45): MAA Membership Meeting.
PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN LOCATION! Our next meeting will be held at the Great Wall Buffet in Augusta (same exit off I-95, but take a left off the ramp for 1/2 mile and it is on the left). Apparently, Governor Baldacci has taken over the Augusta Civic Center for a Plum Creek meeting -- it is closed off to everyone and there will be high security there. Even the employees working that weekend have to have security checks. Thanks, Raini for scrambling to secure us a meeting place at such short notice!!

The guest speaker following the meeting has had to cancel – stay tuned, and we'll let you know via the Yahoo list who our speaker will be.

Saturday, January 26, 2008: MAA Membership Meeting and BOD Elections at the Augusta Civic Center.

Elections will be held at the meeting and absentee ballots will be available beforehand. Two 2-year positions are open. If you are interested in running, please contact either a member of the nominating committee (Pam Drew, Gay DeHart, and Jan Wanggaard) or a BOD member.

Tuesday – Thursday, January 15-17, 2008: Maine Agricultural Trades Show at the Augusta Civic Center. Once again, MAA will have a booth at the Ag Trades Show. We will sell Alpaca Socks and Fiber Frolic t-shirts. It would be great to have an updated Map showing where all of our members are located. We will need 2 volunteers per shift to staff the booth. Please contact Raini ASAP if you are willing to coordinate MAA's participation in this event.

Go to www.getrealmaine.com/visit/trades_show for more information.

Saturday, April 5, 2008 University of Massachusetts-Amherst Camelid Studies and Best Shearing Services will sponsor an alpaca shearing seminar at the Hadley Farm.

Classroom topics include Shears, comb and cutter selection; Maintenance of equipment; Shearing theory, etc. Hands on laboratory includes shearing and alpaca handling techniques. **Class limited to 12 participants, register early!**
\$200 per person proceeds to benefit the U. Mass Camelid Program.

To sign up contact Matthew Best 603-304-5555 or Dr. Steve Purdy 413-549-3820.

Saturday and Sunday, May 10 and 11, 2008: New England Alpaca Festival (NEAF)

The arrival of springtime in this part of the world is heralded by the traditional NEAOBA-sponsored New England Alpaca Festival (NEAF). This spring it will again be held in conjunction with the New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival, and NEAF is hosting its third annual AOBA certified (certification pending) fleece show "The New England Hands On Alpaca Fleece Off". For those who bring their alpacas and fleeces for show and display at NEAF it is an excellent opportunity to speak to potential new breeders, and to sell fiber products and animals.

Go to www.neaoba.org for more information

Saturday and Sunday, June 14 - 15, 2008: The 8th Annual Fiber Frolic, Windsor Fairgrounds. *Sponsored by the Maine Alpaca Association.* We need **your** help, so please mark your calendars and plan to volunteer before, during or after the Frolic. Please note: Once again, we will hold the June Membership meeting at the Frolic on Saturday at 4:15 in the Sugar Shack.

Go to www.fiberfrolic.com for more information

Newsletter ideas, articles, comments, etc. please send to pdh@longwoodsapacas.com .