

Virginia Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association
Monthly Board Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2009

Attendees:

Ken Crews – President
Ray Tubbs – President Elect
Fred Obenchain – Treasurer
Hank Boyd – Director at Large
Les Fuller – Director at Large
Robin Watson – Secretary

Committee Reports were submitted in writing by: Judy Howe and B-J Ellis.

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 pm. The minutes from the October 5th meeting were approved and unanimously accepted.

Treasurer's Report:

Beginning Balance: \$83,460.25
Available Balance: \$49,448.14

Fred reported that we made approximately \$3300 in the silent auction and that the farm store checks went out last week totaling \$1800. The ribbons bill was not in yet from Patty Fuller, all shipping invoices need to go to Fred. Ray will send the checks for the ribbons for the display presentation to Fred. Hank is forwarding a check to Fred that was made out incorrectly. He and Sue went thru the membership list and all names are up-to-date. Next month, Fred will have a complete show expense analysis for us. Ray motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report, Les seconded and everyone agreed.

Committee Reports:

Youth Committee: Ray reported that the 4Hers would like to help out at the VAOBA show again next year. Unfortunately, we will be unable to use the Virginia Tech facilities for a spring show – they are no longer letting outside groups use the facilities. Ray would like for this show to be a fun show for Virginia 4H members and VAOBA member children directed towards showing, performance and with guest speakers. We need a big enough venue to hold animals, rings and workshop space. Fred thought maybe the Prince William Fairgrounds, they do livestock there. Les thought the participation was so good at the show that it would be worth a try to put it together. Fred thought some adults would like to do the performance also.

Ray would like for the show to not be AOBA certified – this would allow us to set our own standards, get our own judge, it should be inexpensive and fun. April/May timeframe, after shearing would be a good time. Fred will find out about 4H insurance coverage and a waiver to protect VAOBA. Fred moved that the youth committee, with the help of other 4H clubs, devise a cost proposal to plan for a performance event for spring 2010. Ken seconded and all accepted.

Education Committee: No report submitted (need Volunteers).

Fiber Committee: (Additional Volunteers welcome). The Fiber Committee report was given to the Board in writing by B-J Ellis (see points 1 thru 7 below). The committee has planned its first telephone conference for November 5th. They hope to have these calls on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month. Fred moved that we allow them to use our conference call center with a new number with the understanding that they may have 2 calls per month since we pay by the minute. Ray seconded. Fred also added that we can do this for any committee that would like to have telephone conference calls. All agreed.

- 1) Current membership includes: B-J Ellis as Chairperson, Linda Polak as Student Design contact, Dee Dee Greer as fiber processing and mill contact, and Judy Shroeder as fleece competition contact. They would like to include two additional members and have one person under consideration who is now completing her new VAOBA membership application. During our first meeting we will formulate a mission statement and our goals for 2009 and beyond.
- 2) We have already begun discussions about amending the VA Finest standards. We plan to (a) review the original standards with respect to the goals of the previous fiber committee in formulating that standard (we will include those former committee members in this review process). Any proposed changes (b) would be intended to protect the integrity of alpaca as a wonderful, high-end luxury fiber. We believe, at this point, (c) that a Virginia's Finest designation on a product label should be related to graded and sorted fiber. It is clear that an individual alpaca whose small fiber sample might have an average micron diameter below 23m would not be expected to keep that fineness throughout its life, nor show it throughout a single clip. Therefore it may be important to take the focus away from an individual animal and its micron count and place it on the properties of harvested fiber (most likely from multiple alpacas) which is sorted and graded into homogeneous groups. This is supported by general acknowledgement that the soft feel or hand of alpaca fiber products is best when the range of fiber diameters is small (ie., larger micron ranges may feel very soft to the skin if the fiber has been properly sorted and graded.) Thus, a blend of fiber from a juvenile alpaca (with a 16 micron count) and the fiber of that same alpaca as a yearling (with a 22 micron count) might not have as good a handle as graded and sorted fiber in the 23-26 micron range from a pool of alpacas. The former blend could be classified as Virginia's Finest under the present standards, but the latter blend could not be so designated. This is the existing contradiction that the fiber committee plans to address.
- 3) The fiber committee is expecting information shortly on the Socks for Wounded Warrior project which might be an avenue to VAOBA member education and training in the fiber sorting and grading process and is an excellent avenue to creating public awareness of the excellence of alpaca fiber.
- 4) The fiber committee held its 1st Annual Fashion Review just before the VAOBA Alpaca Expo Banquet and all reports are that it was well received as "Fun AND Informative." We hope to sponsor this as a continuing event.

- 5) It appears that a student from Radford University will be entering the National Design Competition at the upcoming AOBA Fiber to Fashion Conference. The Fiber Committee proposes that VAOBA should sponsor her by paying her entry fee of \$100.00.
- 6) This is the time of year when Virginia's 4-H club members will be starting their projects and the fiber committee offers its assistance to all existing clubs in initiating such projects.
- 7) The Fiber Committee will have an article ready for the next newsletter, complete with photos of past activities and some ideas about new fiber projects in which our members may be interested.

Industry Relations: (Additional Volunteers welcome). Keli Harold has resigned as chair of the Industry Relations committee. Ray and Hank offered to attend the Ag Council dinner. We would like for 4-5 people to attend the meeting so VAOBA has a presence. Our Ag Council letter will include a check with our 2010 membership fee.

Marketing: (need Volunteers). No report.

Membership: (Additional Volunteers welcome). We have 5 new memberships and the website is up-to-date. Hank will mail new member info to Fred and Ray needs them for the next newsletter. New members need to know that their membership is good thru June 2010. Ray motioned to accept the membership committee report and Fred seconded, all agreed.

Newsletter: November 11th is the deadline for the newsletter. We need some interesting articles, funny stories, etc. The Fiber Committee would like to have a "corner" in the newsletter to report on projects, fiber arts and get others involved. Ray will have some 4H pictures too. Fred accepted the Newsletter Committee report, Ken seconded and all agreed.

Show Committee: Judy reported the survey results from after the show. Our biggest challenge seems to be that the communications in the barns were unclear so folks had to run back and forth to see what classes were up. Fred said that by having the show at the horse center and not at a facility with big square footage saved us on the show. The Show Committee report was approved and agreed by all.

Action Items from Previous Meetings:

MAPACA Meeting: Fred went to the MAPACA Membership meeting in which there were approximately 3-35 people in attendance, mostly PA farms who are close to the meeting site. They presented results of their election and their annual report in which they lost close to \$70,000 on the 2009 show.

Fred polled people to see if they were coming to our VAOBA show; 12 people had come previously, 3-4 were coming this year, some had just been to the NJ show, one inquired about the

blue tongue testing requirement. Les thought the tests were thorough if someone was buying an alpaca from out of state but wondered if we could speak with the Ag Council about having a simple waiver for exhibition purposes and auctions. Hank suggested we need a new person for our Industry Relations Committee to work on this as their number one focus. He said some Ohio farms did not come to our show due to the testing requirements. Les knows some state vets and vets at VT and he believes that they may be reluctant to change, they are very protective of our livestock and may want to continue with the testing.

Virginia's Finest:

Fred reported that the Fiber Committee has their plans and before recommending any changes they will talk to the previous members. No one finds that the current standards are useful for promoting alpaca fiber (current emphasis on clips in micron ranges). He stated that the emphasis needs to be taken away from 1 animal on a farm. The committee is still looking to recruit 2 more VAOBA members. The committee's proposal will be made in a few months.

Les agreed that the new fiber committee will need to speak with the original members along with all the emails that transpired and give us a final report with recommendations. He felt confident that they are being inclusive for fiber to product and that they will ask us for approval when necessary. We will take what the committee has found to the membership.

VAOBA Alpaca Expo: Basked on comments from the show survey, Les would like for us to continue with the Lexington Horse Center stating that the fairgrounds are just not there for us yet, with tent rental, etc. it is just not cost effective. Fred moved to proceed to have the next show at the Lexington Horse Center. Ray stated that we need to reserve the Horse Center by January 1st, 201 with a \$500 deposit. We will need 3 rings and 3 judges, 1 for halter, 1 for showmanship and 1 for fleeces. If we go to a level 5 show we will get another judge. We had 115 fleeces at the October show. We need to get the contracts out to the judges now. Ray thought that Linda worked really well with the kids and that Helen Humphreys was good with them last year so we could also use her for the spring show since she is close. Fred will contact the judges from the show to make sure they received their VAOBA check and also to check on their availability for next year. Since Ray is President-Elect he will get RFPs for supers. Hank stated we need to check on the Horse Show availability first and start the process of acquiring judges. Les proposed we move forward with the date, supers, organizers and judges, Ray seconded and all were in favor.

Student Design: Fred reported that AOBA would like for us to donate \$100 for a "student design fee" where money would be split between contestants. We would like to support a local person. This national competition was not timed well with the school year but that will change with Fiber to Fashion. Fred moves that we authorize to support Katelynn Lemons in the Fiber to Fashion Contest, Ray seconded and all approved.

Limited Term Committee – Marketing Feasibility: Les would like to contact Steve Maddis to see if he may be interested in the Industry Relations position to either get a change in the testing requirements or some sort of waiver for shows. Ken will contact John Ferrante to see if he has some fresh ideas about marketing for our members.

Virginia Agribusiness Council Membership Renewal (Fee \$550.00):

Our Ag Council letter will include a check with our 2010 membership fee.

New Business:

AlpacaStreet Marketing Proposal: We received a marketing proposal from AlpacaStreet. We are not yet certain of the value to our members. Hank was concerned about monitoring and maintenance of the site and would like to see if Dan Coulter would give us a presentation.

Augusta County Ordinance Proposal: Hank reported on Chapter 25 zoning restrictions where they limit agriculture to 5 acres. Fred said their zoning is under 10 acres you cannot have livestock, equines are an exception. We may be able to make a case to the state that camelids be allowed. We need the Industry Relations Committee to look at having a special permit or a variance so that smaller tracts of land may have alpacas since they are friendly to the soil. Les stated that each county restricts what you can do by interpreting the state laws so changes need to be made at the state level. Hank said that they can have 1 horse to every 2 acres and Fred said that for every extra acre they can have another horse.

Fred motioned to adjourn the meeting, Les seconded and our meeting was adjourned at 9:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Watson
Secretary 2009-2010