Government & Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom) MINUTES October 12, 2020

Committee Members: Bonnie Potter, Chair
Joan Clappier
Dr. Pat Long
Tom Petersen
Brion Smoker

Board Liaison: Wendy Dittbrenner

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 pm ET.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance — Dittbrenner/Huntley

- Wendy reported that the AOA board is discussing setting terms for committee members. Goal: rotation of members.
  - They are developing a policy … possibly 3-year terms with a break between terms of at least one year before that person returns to the same committee. They are also discussing making exceptions in some cases. Dr. Pat Long, as the veterinarian serving on GIRCom, is an example of when an exception might be made.
  - Comments from Committee members: This is a working Committee. We've had some people come and go who, for a variety of reasons, didn't have the time to devote to the position. We are open to new people and perhaps expanding the size of the committee would be appropriate. It would also give us the opportunity to bring in some new people and get them up to speed on what we do.
  - Wendy will take our comments back to the Board
- AOA is working on possible show venues and schedules for next year, with the constraints and uncertainties of Covid.
- Working on show venues and covid "planning" … national show next year?
- Computer system upgrades are in the works.
- They are waiting for the last of the fiber samples to come in to send them all to NZ for testing
- NAFD: There was a lot of participation and AOA received some good feedback.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts/Conference — Long / Potter

- The USAHA conference this year is a virtual conference, going on for several days (right now). They will be getting to the sheep/goat/camelids on Thursday.
- Pat plans to talk about the following topics:
  - The impact of the negative shearing video on the alpaca industry
  - The possible ban on sheep, goats and camelids in areas of Alaska due to fear of spreading disease to the wild mountain goats
  - How camelids are playing a part in Covid research due to the potential usefulness of their heavy chain antibodies in developing treatments.
- In USAHA Alerts, much of the information is about mosquito transmitted diseases such as encephalitis and WNV. There might be higher numbers of cases further north this year, but it should be diminishing soon with the onset of colder weather.
- There are still a few reports of vesicular stomatitis.
- They are seeing more rabies than normal in sheep, cattle and horses.
- Covid is affecting the supply chain of necessities in the livestock industry.

3.0 Unfinished Business

3.1 Alpaca Business Benchmarks/Brion Presentation — Potter/Smoker

- Bonnie and Brion will discuss this.

3.2 Sustainable Agriculture/Assistance with Grants — Potter/Smoker

- The FDA has money available for various agricultural assistance programs. Brion sent a lot of information and links to Bonnie, which she reviewed and consolidated into a first draft eBlast. One grant program which covers covid-related loss of income due to “commodities for sale” specifically includes alpacas in the section on sales of fur, fiber and feathers. Application deadline is December 11, so she put that program first in the document.
- Committee discussion and suggestions:
  - Too much information for many people to digest. Needs to be a bit simpler.
  - Committee members with personal experience working face-to-face with FSA agents find them easy to work with and very interested in helping us. However, an applicant needs to go in with a business plan and idea what type of support is being sought.
  - Building a personal relationship with a local FSA representative is really valuable.
  - Include a link in the eBlast to find a local USDA-FSA office.
- A motion was made, seconded and passed to have Bonnie put together a shorter “part 1” document and send it to the committee members for quick review by email rather than wait until the November meeting to approve it.

3.3 IRS and State Tax Audits - deferred — Smoker

3.4 International Transport of Alpacas/Info for website - deferred — Potter

4.0 New Business

None at this time.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Minutes for approval: (9/14/20) — Clappier

- Motion to approve the minutes of 9/14/20 was made by Brion seconded by Tom. Motion was passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap

6.1 Review Action Items — Potter

- Bonnie: Work on shorter eblast about USDA/FSA assistance.

6.2 Next Meeting Date: 11/9/2020 — Potter

6.3 Adjournment — Potter

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm ET.