Government & Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom) MINUTES February 10, 2020

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

Board Liaison: Andy Merriwether

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

Executive Director: Robin Gifford

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm ET.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance — Merriwether/Huntley

- Executive Director Robin Gifford joined us for the meeting. Bonnie gave her some background information on GIRCom.
- AOA is getting ready for Nationals in March, with planning, logistics and marketing.
- Early bird registration for Nationals ends today.
- Annual membership renewal is open. The office spot-checked the list last week and there are still lots of people who are on committees who have not yet renewed their memberships.
- Bonnie noticed AOA is doing a lot of Facebook marketing for membership. Dan said renewals seem to be on track with last year, which was an increase from the preceding year.
- Tom asked for the status of Brion's suggestion to send invoices to members to increase renewals. Robin said that she and the Board are receptive to the idea. When Robin was at a camelid symposium recently she queried members about the idea and people liked it.

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts — Long / Potter

- There was not much directly affecting alpacas.
- Many posts about African swine fever. We don't know if it would affect camelids.
- Coronavirus from China: Pat reminded us that there have been several instances over the years of series outbreaks of corona virus strains that have affected camelids, including MERS 2-3 years ago, which affected camels in the middle east, and the "snots" virus which got transmitted through alpaca shows some years ago, resulting in a lot of sick alpacas and some fatalities.
- There have been no new cases of vesicular stomatitis reported in a couple of months. Pat reported that VS can overwinter in mosquito eggs, thus could very well resurface when the weather warms up again.
- Mosquito-borne illnesses have settled down for the winter.

3.0 Unfinished Business

3.1 Alpaca Business Benchmarks — Potter/All

- De sent a spreadsheet to the Committee with results from first 10 respondents.
- Some possible errors have been noticed where expenses and/or income don't add up to the listed total, and in one case some incorrect data might have been entered. Brion suggested that we should keep looking at the data as it comes in to see if there are consistent types of errors people might be making, so that we can add instructions if required.

- Tom has recently relocated is farm to a different state. In the process of getting a loan, he was asked about his profit/loss for raising alpacas. This points out, again, that owners need to know this information.
- Brion will be giving a presentation at a NC show soon. He will explain the benefits of filling out the online questionnaire, for both the individuals and for the industry. Brion will send a copy of his presentation to the Committee.

3.2 IRS and State Tax Audits — Smoker

- It is non-audit season.

3.3 Agritourism … How We Can Help Our Members — Potter/All

- Bonnie is working on draft document.
- Pat sent the Committee information about a study on Agritourism being done at University of Vermont. Bonnie went to their website and found a treasure trove of information. There is also a lot of information on the Oregon State University site.

3.4 International Transport of Alpacas — All

- In response to a question, Dan said our information did get passed on to the person from Europe who inquired. Dan has not heard anything further from him.
- We are continuing to gather information toward posting a summary on the AOA website
- Tom asked the committee if we have any idea how many people in industry are involved in international transport. We don't know, but expect it is just a few. We discussed that it might be possible to do a query on the AOA database for ownership transfers to other countries.

4.0 New Business

4.1 Camelid Education for Veterinarians

- Ohio State is getting ready for the annual camelid conference the end of May. They will once again offer it for veterinarians and for owners. It has been a while since GIRCom has put out an eblast to the members about veterinary symposiums covering camelids, so that the owners can be sure their veterinarians know about them. Pat thinks that camelids are not being discussed as much as they were.
- The Greater Appalachian Alpaca Association is having one in November.
- We will put together an eblast for the members.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Minutes for approval: (1/13/20) — Potter/Clappier

Motion to approve the minutes of 1/13/20 was made by Pat, seconded by Joan. Motion was passed.

6.0 Meeting Wrap

6.1 Review Action Items — Potter

- Bonnie: Check with De to see if we have identification for people filling out benchmark study in case we want to contact some of them about possible errors in their responses.
- Bonnie: continue working on agritourism document.
- Bonnie: Create a document with the information gathered on international transport, for positing on the AOA website
- All: Send any additional information or useful links about agritourism to Bonnie
- Brion: Send benchmarks presentation to Committee

6.2 Next Meeting Date 3/9/2020 — Potter

6.3 Adjournment — Potter

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm ET.