Government & Industry Relations Committee (GIRCom) MINUTES November 11, 2019

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

Board Liaison: Andy Merriwether

Staff Representative: Dan Huntley

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 pm ET.

1.0 Meeting Opening

1.1 AOA News of Importance — Merriwether/Huntley

- New Executive Director: Robin Gifford has been selected as the new Executive. She starts on Dec. 3. She was one of the three top candidates. Her extensive, relevant experience includes executive director experience in the horse industry and running her own business.
- AOA staff represented the organization at the recent USDA Farmer's Market meeting.
- Margie & Dan attended the annual, 3-day FFA convention. The AOA booth included our new fiber display, plus alpacas in the booth (which are always a good draw).There was lots of traffic at the booth. It was a good opportunity to represent industry and they collected over 400 leads.
- The annual Alpaca Showtacular event was in early November in New York. This show is jointly put on by NEAOBA and Empire Alpaca Association, so it is 2 shows under one roof. AOA had several folks there staffing a booth

2.0 Health/Government Related

2.1 USAHA Alerts — Long / Potter

- VS still in the news, although it should die back as we continue towards winter. There was a new case in KS in early November and still cases in CO and New England.
- There have been a few cases of WNV reported in non-camelid species, including a horse in OR.
- There is a new veterinary school in AZ and a new one opening in NY. This should help with our shortage of veterinary personnel.
- The FDA requiring prescriptions for more antibiotics. They appear to be working towards having NO over-the-counter antibiotics.

2.2 USAHA meeting

- Dr. Pat Long attended the annual USAHA (US Animal Health Association) meeting in Providence RI, Oct 26-30. He has been representing the alpaca industry at USAHA for 10 years and he is now known as the "Alpaca guy". We thank him for representing us.
- USAHA is over 100 years old and has had major influence on the health regulations impacting livestock over the years. It is also the forum where industry and science interact with regulatory officials – both state and federal – to impact future legislation affecting livestock..
- The plenary session topic was the African Swine Fever. This disease does not affect people, but about half the pigs in china have died or been how the world community is dealing with this. It is informative to see how the world community responds to an animal disease outbreak and the thought process behind dealing with an outbreak like this. It gives us information on what resources are available if some disease like this threatens our industry.

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- Pat attended a session on Emergency planning.
- There was discussion about BVDV. This disease has been present in the US and Canada since 1946 and little progress has been made in testing or vaccination to limit the disease in cattle. It is important that the camelid community be aware that we could see a recurrence of cases in camelids.
- The Sheep, Goat and Camelid committee had several sessions on sheep and goats. Pat arranged a presentation on parasite resistance to de-worming products. There is interest from the committee in working with Canadian producer groups toward getting simultaneous approval in both US and Canada for these types of products for use in minor species such as sheep, goats and camelids.
- Animal welfare committee: The beef and poultry industries are working on improved animal welfare. Some of the demands of animal rights groups, however, are onerous. There are challenges balancing animal welfare, sustainability, and worker safety.

3.0 Unfinished Business

Note: The Unfinished Business topics were put on the back burner this month so that the committee could discuss two potentially problematic legislative issues that have come up (see New Business).

3.1	Alpaca Business Benchmarks	Potter/All
3.2	IRS and State Tax Audits	Smoker
3.3	Agritourism … How Can We Help Our Members?	All
3.4	Continued Brainstorming on how GIRCom can assist with AOA Strategic Plan	All

4.0 New Business

4.1 California Fur Law Assembly Bill 44 — Potter

- This new law bans the sale of most products that have fiber/hair/fur attached to skin/hide. It does not ban the sale of leather products such as gloves, belts, etc. It is clearly aimed at the “mink coat” culture.
- Sheep, goats and deer are exempted from the ban, but camelids are not.
- This bill was passed and signed into law before alpaca owners in CA became aware of it. It goes into effect in 2023.
- This bill makes it illegal to import and sell products made from alpaca hides, such as dolls and rugs. It would have a negative impact on alpaca owners who sell alpaca teddy bears and other dolls in their stores and at events.
- We will work with the California Alpaca Breeders Association to get the bill amended to include alpacas (and llamas) in the exemption that has been granted to sheep, goats and deer.
- Even though this currently impacts only CA, we need to get an amendment passed to reduce the chance of other states copying CA.

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4.2 Animal ID tracking, Michigan requirement Potter/Long

- A question about a new animal ID requirement in MI was sent to the AOA Board and forwarded to GIRCom.
- Background:
    - Animal traceability has been a concern for the USDA for 20 years since a calf with BSE came in from Canada. AKA "mad cow disease" this is a serious concern for humans as well as cattle. Authorities were completely unable to trace back where the calf had come from and how many herds had been directly or indirectly exposed.
    - The US Federal government began work on creating a system to assign an ID to each animal and keep a record of when and where each animal has been. The system was supposed to go into effect January 2020, but that date has been pushed back 60-90 days for a comment period.
    - The USDA would like to go to 15-digit microchips, which will include a premise ID.
    - The USDA is mainly concerned with large herds, so cattle are of much more interest than the relatively tiny number of alpacas in the US. There are no traceability requirements for alpacas at the federal level.
    - Currently, many alpacas in the US are microchipped.
- While the federal government has no microchip requirements for alpacas, each state can impose whatever requirements they choose. Michigan has decided to apply the federal requirements to alpacas, thus requiring the 15-digit microchip, premise ID, etc. This would apply to alpacas being transported to or through MI.
- The federal implementation date for cattle has been postponed and presumably the state implementation date should be tied to the federal date.
- Every state has its own CVI requirements. MI is currently requiring a 15-digit microchip. [There is an eartag option which is probably of no interest to alpaca owners.] AVID chips don't meet this requirement. MI also requires negative brucellosis test to enter their state.
- After significant discussion, the opinion of the GIRCom committee is:
    - If MI alpacas have no chip or the wrong type of chip, it is not uncommon to have multiple chips in an alpaca, so that is a straightforward solution.
    - Any time an alpaca is transported to or through another state, the originating veterinarian is responsible for ensuring that the CVI meets all requirements for the other state(s). If that includes a putting in a different chip, put one in.
    - Pat feels that this will become standard within 15-20 years for all livestock
- Bottom line:
    - This is not a crisis and putting out an AlpacaGram is likely to create unnecessary angst.
    - Veterinarians should be aware of changes and assist their clients.
    - Alpaca owners in MI may want to approach their state veterinarian to discuss how necessary it is to include alpacas in this requirement. If MI has a strong affiliate, that organization can address the issue at the state level.
    - But this is not a catastrophe and is likely to be inevitable.

5.0 Approval of Minutes (Minutes for approval: (10/14/19) Potter/Clappier

- Motion to approve the minutes of 10/14/19 was made by Pat and seconded by Tom. Motion was passed.

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6.0 Meeting Wrap

6.1 Review Action Items — Potter

- Bonnie has sent Pat's USAHA report to the rest of the committee
- We will look at the status of the Benchmarks study and other "old business" next month
- Dan: Remove Mary-Margaret from the GIRCom emal list
- Bonnie: Contact Calpaca about getting the CA anti-fur bill amended.

6.2 Next Meeting Date 12/9/2019 — Potter

6.3 Adjournment — Potter

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm ET