NAWSA Board of Director Meeting – September 12, 2021

Type of meeting: Conference call

Attendees: BOD members present D’Andrea Tyree (President), Virginia Scholomiti (Vice President, Lois Olund, Nan Leaman

Members of the NAWSA present : Jillian McIntosh, Janet Menendez, Cory Simpson (BOD absent Nan Fickett and Sheryl Meacham)

Meeting was called to order and attendance taken after there was a Quorum of BOD present.

Old Business: Unapproved meeting minutes from a Special BOD called by the President in December of 2020. These minutes will need to be mailed to the BOD for approval and then posted to the NAWSA website.

Status of Nominations for BOD elections for 2022 – 2024 terms: Ballots and Bios were completed and will be mailed to all Active NAWSA members on Monday September 13, 2021 and are due back in the SASE provided post marked by October 5, 2021 so that New BOD members can be announced at the Annual Membership Meeting scheduled for October 10, 2021.

Review of Official Activity in 2021 – D’Andrea addressed the group and discussed the challenges met by the BOD during this year. The year began with the BOD being informed of a possible invalid registration of lambs by a member. This was discovered because this member was looking for a specific bloodline and when the breeder was contacted it was discovered that that particular Ram had never been collected and also that several sheep in question were never registered by that same breeder either. An investigation was begun by the BOD that took months to review all the documentation, discuss the matter with the member in question, the breeder who had been the victim of fraud, as well as an additional non member who had purchased several of the sheep with now questionable registrations. The BOD attempted every avenue possible to track down the individuals who reportedly supplied unregistered semen and unregistered sheep to a member of the NAWSA. The genetics laboratory was questioned, hours were spent talking with individuals involved and then the BOD made the only decision they could based on the evidence that was submitted. These sheep were then removed from the registry because their pedigrees could not be proven. This unfavorable decision by the BOD resulted in then threats of lawsuits against the BOD themselves for making this unfavorable decision. After months of lawsuit threats and offers made to these individuals to try to come up with some sort of reasonable solution it was decided that the BOD needed to retain an attorney to deal with the continued threats to be sued. Because two of the sheep in question were able to be identified as owned at one time by the member who had been victimized by the fraud but not given her approval to register the NAWSA BOD offered to the member in question that these ewes would be allowed foundation status and could enter their lambs going forward through the registry in this manner. The member with the questionable registrations and individual who owned some of the sheep now did not agree to this offer. Thus we now have a lawyer on hand who will address this issue should the threats continue. AT this time the NAWSA stands firm in its decision to withdraw the registrations of the sheep in question and GLM has removed them from the registry.

Due to this incident the decision to review all registration requirements for AI lambs, semen, sires( both domestic and imported) were reviewed and processes and forms updated to provide better traceable information in the even that a situation like this would ever occur again. These changes were made to protect both the breeder and the seller of semen and or sheep.

It was also noted at this time that the liability or responsibility for a members business choices lies with that member and it is not for the BOD to have to investigate once the fraudulent activity has occurred. It was stated that a best practices for any member in the business of purchasing semen should be checking with GLM registry to make sure that the Ram is registered and there is knowledge of that Ram being collected and when. If the seller cannot provide you with this information and it cannot be verified with GLM than the member is at risk of issues when it comes time to register lambs out of those breedings. As always when these difficult situation happen they can be brought to the attention of the BOD and the BOD determination after investigation will be final.

 Since we had already entered into legal areas we decided that as per our bylaws we would also review our current Not for Profit status with a CPA to determine what if anything the Association needed to be doing differently than they have done for the past 20 years. The current situation is that we are a Not for Profit 501C organization registered with the State of Washington where we file our State registry every year. We have never made an income to file with the Federal Gov and therefore we have never done that. If at some point in the future a very large donation was made to the NAWSA or we started having earnings over $50,000 per year we would then have to make that filing. The recommendation of the CPA was to continue to do what we have been doing unless something changes drastically. In Lieu of the threats to be sued even though our bylaws state that we are not employees but volunteers and therefore cannot be held liable for decisions that needed to be made or human error we still will be seeking estimates for Liability coverage for the entire BOD going forward. We consulted with other sheep organizations and most do carry this type of insurance for its BOD members.

The topic of registering wethers was then discussed with D’Andrea giving her reasons for allowing registrations; 1. ability to increase size of registered flock without having to deal with management issues created by having multiple rams on site. 2. Cost and planning associated with creating these sheep even if they will never be used in the members breeding program. 3. They are still of considerable value for their wool, meat and exhibition purposes even if right now Wethers are apparently not shown as adults but only used for 4 H exhibitors and/or in Hall of Breeds exhibits. Perhaps this is an area we should be concentrating on to promote our breed amongst the 4-H groups. That could possibly help the current situation of judges who know nothing about wool sheep as was demonstrated recently at the Wisconsin Sheep and Wool Festival. Cory Simpson asked to be recognized with a comment regarding his support of registering Wethers as well stating the whole point of registration is to be able to track pedigrees and it is always quite possible that a buyer might see a whether and want to know the pedigree of that particular sheep and we should be able to produce that with an official document. The BOD will have a closed voting session on this matter after it is included on the agenda for the annual membership meeting so that we might hear the opinions of our members on this matter as well.

 D’Andrea asked if there were any other questions from the members who had been in attendance for the meeting and Janet Menedez had a question regarding the New semen forms and Virginia addressed that question for her.

Since Cory Simpson has been the coordinator for the current Semen importation from the UK, working with Deb Nelson Gourley to import four new Rams I asked if he would mind providing an update on that situation and he graciously agreed. All rams have passed all the required medical tests. One white Ram has successfully provided 100 straws and the second is close. The two colored rams still have some work to do to complete the goal but they do not have any concerns at this time that they feel would compromise the collection results so that was very encouraging and exciting. The NAWSA is in full support of this semen importation effort and thankful to have the possibility of new UK semen available to the US breeders. Inquiries for semen availability can be made to Cory Simpson or Deb Nelson Gourley. GLM is aware of this anticipated import and all parties involved understand the paperwork that needs to be submitted to GLM to register the semen once it arrives in the US.

Virginia stated that members are welcome to send suggested topics for the Annual Membership meeting and we will be discussing registering Wethers, best business practices for members, review of the new forms for AI, semen usage and registration and transfer of lambs along with any other topics that are provided by membership. WE are always in need of members to volunteer to chair committees or who are willing to work on things like updating the NAWSA website, assisting with writing and editing a quarterly newsletter, spearheading involvement in the major Wool Festivals and sheep events across the country.

It was also discussed that the FB Discussion page and the North American Wensleydale Sheep on Facebook page are not official NAWSA sanctioned FB pages. They are however administered and moderated by NAWSA members and/or BOD members. Going forward there will be zero tolerance for hateful, derogatory comments aimed to slander or condemn BOD members. The abuse and false information being posted will no longer be tolerated. It will be the decision of the ADMINs for these pages to remove not only the comments but also the individuals who chose to insight anger, unrest, and generally create a volatile atmosphere. New rules are being posted to both of these sites that are intended to be used to share information, promote discussion, and ask questions regarding the breed. We desire an atmosphere of kindness, enthusiasm, excitement and sharing of valuable knowledge.

A reminder will be posted to the Discussion Group on FB regarding returning your voting ballots for the current openings on the BOD. The Discussion Group on FB is for ACTIVE NAWSA members only while the North American Wensleydale Sheep on Facebook page is used for the general public and enthusiasts of the breed.

A motion was made to end the meeting by Virginia Sholomiti and Lois Olund second that motion.