



The British Alpaca Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Alpaca Society held at 11.00 am on Saturday 10 March 2007 at the Stoneythorpe Hotel, Warwick Road, Southam, Warwickshire CV47 0HN

1 Chairman's welcome

The Chairman, Rob Bettinson, welcomed all members present, particularly those who were former BCA members.

2 Apologies for absence

There were 102 members and 3 visitors in attendance. The Chairman gave particular apologies from Nigel Cobb, Tim Hey and Keith Rushforth who were standing for appointment to the Board but were unable to be present. Apologies were received from 132 other members.

3 Minutes of the AGM held on 14 January 2006

Mr Harrington-Smith asked why the number of proxy votes was not recorded in the minutes. The Society Secretary commented that this had never been done in the past. Mr Harrington-Smith considered that the forms were made out in favour of the Chairman and with a large number of blank proxy votes, the Chairman would be in a position to influence the vote. Mandy Wilson pointed out that this was the case with any blank proxy vote. The Society Secretary commented that very few of the proxy votes received had been blank and where members had indicated their preference for voting, this could not be altered by the proxy.

Mandy Wilson proposed and Antony Rucker seconded the approval of the minutes. This was carried unanimously.

4 Chairman's report

Rob Bettinson, as Chairman of the Board, summarised the Society's activities during the previous year and then invited Board members with special responsibilities to report on particular areas..

The significant event of the year had been the formation of the federation on the 10th anniversary of the Society. He thanked the Board for all their work and support during the federation negotiations and especially Nick Weber of British Camelids Association. He commented that the Society is expanding rapidly and that the number of members and their geographical spread was increasing on a daily basis. There is a need to recognise the national structure of the Society and its representation of members with a few animals to those with big breeding herds. The key to the Society's development lay in the regional groups and they would play a key role in the proposed National Show Committee which would be structured to finalise Show Rules for the following season by mid November each year. The next stage would be the establishment of a National Welfare Committee and a National Marketing Committee.

Most of the work of the Society is carried out on a voluntary basis and it is recognised that the Society should now be looking to employ a Chief Executive. The Board had commissioned Robert Terry, former Chief Executive and Company Secretary of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, to consider this role and how it might best be established.

Although all of the existing Board members were standing down, they were all prepared to assist the new Board to ensure the greatest possible continuity.

Graham Reed reported on *Import Screening and DNA Testing*. During the year, the Society, through Grassroots Systems and the Screening sub-committee, given advice and assistance to importers prior to raising screening contracts. It has then administered the screening process. Since January 2006, Nick Weber has joined the screening sub-committee and he has been very active in concluding outstanding BCA screening contract. His help and input has been invaluable during the merger of the two registries. The Society had screened 290 alpacas in six different countries. 21% of the total failed screening with 50% of these failing on points, 35% on weight and 15% on a veterinary disqualification.

There has been a 100% success in the initial trial of DNA sampling. Ninety samples were taken from a cross-section of 10 volunteer member with both large and small herds. Thirty-three more samples had been received recently and these were awaiting delivery to the laboratory. The system is ready to be made available to all the membership as soon as the new Board has set the fees and defined the terms. This allows full independence for the BAS as it owns the DNA data from the samples supplied and, with Grassroots Systems, has developed its own parent verification checking program. Possible new developments include a mouth swab DNA test which has been developed by the Australian Alpaca Association. This is currently being investigated to determine the compatibility of the DNA vectors used with those used by the Society.

Keith Scott reported on *Registration*. There is now a single national alpaca registry. The previous year had been intense with much planning going into the registry merger which was achieved smoothly. A simple common agreement had been reached for the naming and numbering of alpacas. All members were asked to check the entries for their own animals and to notify Grassroots of any errors. There were 17,405 records with 13,806 live animals. 12,337 animals were fully registered as pedigree breeding animals, 439 were notified with the possibility of upgrading and 520 were listed as non-breeding animals. 1530 animals had been listed on both registries. 2477 former BCA registrations had been merged into the BAS register.

The online facilities associated with the register were being developed. It was now possible to make online applications. In 2006, 336 different BAS members used the online herd management system and there were 200 visits per month. 700 new cria had been registered via the website. Transfers can also be reported through the website. The online facilities also include show entries and membership renewals with payment being made by PayPal.

Since the formation of the federation, the registry rules are incorporated into the BAS Articles. Any changes are constrained by the Articles with the final decision resting with the membership.

Many male cria are not being registered but BAS wants to keep as complete a record as possible of the herd and the location of animals. The new Board would be discussing a proposal that notification of male cria would be free of charge or at a nominal fee. Transfer of listed alpacas is already free.

The new Board has also been asked to consider changes to the registry rules relating to jointly owned animals. It is hoped that additional owners can be listed on the database. Any changes will be notified to the members and if there are no objections, the changes will be made and the members notified.

Maxine Watts reported on *BAS Shows*. There had been 10 major BAS shows including the National, Bath and West and Three Counties. Shows were located from Scotland to Cornwall. In the 2007 shows, entries are expected to exceed 2000. Shows will be mainly judged by BAS judges. Entry forms and online entries are being standardised. Regional groups are taking responsibility for the shows in their areas. There will be no Championship in 2007. The National will be the top halter show and the Royal the top fleece show and alpaca showcase. The new National Show Committee structure will enable agreement to be made and assist show organisers with the arrangements for their shows. Maxine thanked the Show Committee and especially Rob Bettinson for his support.

Alan Lorentzen reported on *Media, Magazine and Marketing*. 2006 had been a year of consolidation. The website was being developed as a vehicle for all members. It had considerable potential which was gradually being realised. There are now pages for BAS shows and events, Regional group events and Private member initiatives. Ways of assisting regional groups to set up their own website, possibly as an offshoot of the BAS website, were being investigated.

The magazine, *Alpaca*, is regarded as one of the leading breed society magazines. The design had been updated. A new editor had been appointed during the year and she welcomes contributions from all members. The four issues are now themed, with Spring being a pre-show issue, Summer covering the shows, Autumn concentrating on fibre and products and Winter featuring breeding and stud males.

Financial constraints because of the formation of the federation had restricted the production of promotional material but the Blue Book had been replaced by a single A4 folder containing a précis of the information previously included in the Blue Book. The fibre colour chart had just been reproduced and laminated for durability. The membership needs to indicate how it wishes to be promoted and the marketing plan will form an integral part of the Society business plan.

Philip O'Connor reported on *Welfare*. There had always been a pan-Society welfare group dealing with all camelids which regularly deals with management questions. Several calls had been received relating to strict welfare issues. The Joint Health and Welfare Committee appreciates the support of two excellent camelid vets, Robert Broadbent and Andrew Starnes. Regional groups are encouraged to appoint a welfare representative with details being made available in the magazine. These would then form the first point of call for welfare issues which would be transferred to the welfare committee and the vets if appropriate.

Over the last 12 months, the main welfare issue has been TB. Blue tongue has not yet been reported in the UK and Johnes appears to be quiet at present. A major concern is the increasing number of animals being sold as singles (not as sheep guards).

New European transport regulations have come into force and members were informed that they are being strictly enforced. Anyone transporting their animals for a distance over 40 km (round trip) must hold an Animal Transporter Authorisation, either Type 1 for journeys of under 40 km and 8 hours or Type 2 for journeys of over 8 hours. The Authorisation must be kept in the vehicle. The rules regarding type of vehicle, ventilation and cleanliness are also being tightened.

Philip thanked the Health and Welfare Committee and particularly the Secretary, Liz Butler.

Michael Berry reported on *Regional Groups*. There had been an increase in regional groups in 2006 but there was always room for more. Michael highlighted the need for a group in the Cheshire area and reported that he had already had a request to attend the Formby Show in 2008. It has been suggested that a regional group be defined by postcode with a primary area and a secondary area for each. However, it was emphasised that this did not preclude any member attending a meeting of any regional group. The structure of the group will depend on its size and how long it has been established. The plan for regional groups to appoint a welfare office was repeated and the National Show Committee was seen as an important development. The alpaca presence in shows has been increasing, not just in the large national shows but in local ones as well.

Nick Weber reported on *British Camelids*. He acknowledged the support of all Board members in the formation of the federation. The BCA was originally established 19 years ago when the only camelid in the country was a llama. Now there is an independent British Llama Society breed society. British Camelids now enters a new era where it will concentrate on welfare for all camelids. It has been encouraged by the presence of the vets Martin Jose and Robert Broadbent on the Council. This helps to give British Camelids credibility with Defra and put across the message that alpacas are a serious sector.

There are vacancies on the British Camelids Board which can be filled by co-option. A Director of BAS and of BLS should be on the Council and British Camelids is keen to maintain communications with the BAS Board.

There are now two clinicians in the UK who have camelid experience. One is Karin Muller from the Cambridge Vet School and the other is Claire Whitehead from the University of London Vet School. Karin had put two research proposals to British Camelids which are being considered for funding. British Camelids sponsors a vet to attend a camelid vet conference in the US and currently Robert Broadbent is attending one in Oregon. He will report to the British Camelids conference.

On the education side, Martin Jose has written to all vet schools in the country which have little or no camelid input offering to visit and lecture. A similar initiative is to be undertaken with the Agricultural Colleges.

TB is a serious and worrying issue. British Camelids expect to have a useful role to work with Defra and other authorities to develop a testing regime for camelids. Interest has been shown by Brussels. An information sheet on Blue Tongue is available on the British Camelids website and the Defra website. If it arrives in the UK, this will halt the movement of alpacas. BVD is not a major disease but it causes problems if animals are affected. The particular problem is if there are Persistent Infective (PI) animals in the herd.

British Camelids has to fund its future. It will be funded by a percentage of the registration fees and member subscriptions of the two breed societies. However, research is expensive and there will be a need to look for other funds and grants. To obtain this funding, projects must be specific and members are encouraged to inform British Camelids of any issues that they believe should be investigated.

5 Treasurer's Report, Accounts for year ending 31 March 2005 and Management Accounts to 31 December 2006

Freddie Small reported that the year end had been changed to 31 December which gave rise to a nine-month period from 31 March 2006 to 31 December 2006. This had been done to enable members to have the most up-to-date information possible. For this reason, the papers had included the management accounts to 31 December 2006. These had been produced in the six weeks prior to the circulation of the AGM papers. The full accounts for the nine months will be presented to the new Board and will be available on the website when they are finalised. In the Profit and Loss Account for the nine months, the line headed 'screening fees' should read 'import registration fees'. Subscriptions are being increased by inflation. When Robert Terry's report is presented to the new Board, it will be able to produce a business plan and, if re-elected, Freddie Small will produce a budget. He noted that 95% of members had herds of up to 49 animals and 2% had herds of over 100 animals.

Chas Brooke asked if the Society was liable for any taxes. Freddie Small replied that this will have to be investigated by the new Board. Currently there is no tax liability because of the loss made by payment of monies to British Camelids. No tax provision has been made on the loss.

Chas Brooke asked if there should be an audit of the registry. Keith Scott replied that this was being planned.

Nick Harrington-Smith asked why the full accounts were not available for the nine-month period to 31 December 2006. Rob Bettinson replied that it had been hoped to have them signed off in time for the AGM but this had not been possible. However, the aim was to give members the latest information which was available in the management accounts. Freddie Small commented that the members had agreed at a previous AGM to dispense with an audit but this could be altered if 10% of the membership agree to put forward a motion. When they are finalised, the nine-month accounts will be available on the website. Rob Bettinson pointed out that if the books were audited, this would delay their availability for several months.

Nick Harrington-Smith considered that it would have been proper for the nine-month accounts to be signed off by the retiring Board. Freddie Small responded that the accounts to be signed off at the AGM are the full year accounts to 31 March 2006.

Peter Garner thanked the Board for presenting the latest information to the members in such a short time.

Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Peter Garner and seconded by Antony Rucker. This was carried unanimously.

Pat Bentley asked that more effort be put into fibre conversion and breeding quality fibre as there was a danger that animals will be bred to sub-standard males. Rob Bettinson reported that sub-committees for fibre and for stud male qualification had been proposed. Male certification is being discussed and there was a need for a National Fibre Committee.

Nick Harrington-Smith asked how the Board dealt with complaints. He had been asked to lodge £5000 for each complaint with the Society in respect of his complaints against a member of the Board and the Board itself. Rob Bettinson pointed out that Nick Harrington-Smith had raised the complaint, not the Board. The matter had been dealt with under the confidentiality of the Board. Any member is entitled to raise a complaint but under the new rules, they were asked to lodge money with the Society. It was not right that the Society's money should be used for such complaints. Nick Harrington-Smith requested that the level of money requested be published. He also asked how the figure had been set. He was not going to cost the Society money but he felt that this was not in line with an open Board and Society. Rob Bettinson pointed out that all Board minutes are published and available to all members.

Brenda Bugler asked if the question of qualifying stud males had been discussed at the Board. Rob Bettinson reported that this was not yet a Board matter. Brenda Bugler asked when members would be able to discuss the matter. Rob Bettinson said that a sub-committee would be appointed to present proposals which will then be put to the members. Brenda Bugler considered that this was working backwards and the sub-committee discussions should represent the view of the members. Rob Bettinson assured her that nothing would happen without the members' approval.

Antony Rucker commented that he had not received notification of any rule changes for the past two years, apart from those relating to the federation. He considered that this included changes to the Show Rules. The procedures allowed members 14 days to comment on any rule changes, Keith Scott considered that the Show Rules were not part of the Society rules but are the rules for the conduct of a

competition run by the Society. Antony Rucker pointed out that the shows are the shop window of the Society and members should be notified in advance and given a chance to comment on any changes. Keith Scott commented that he would welcome clarification on this point. Chas Brooke supported the view put forward by Antony Rucker and pointed out that changes to rules for the Australian Alpaca Association are sent round at regular times during the year. This may result in decision making operating at a slightly slower rate. Rob Bettinson pointed out that the structure of the National Show Committee would allow changes to the rules to be circulated to members as these will be finalised in November for the following show season. Antony Rucker considered that there should be a rider to the existing rule giving the Board responsibility to act in an emergency.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.55.

6 Election of members to the Board of Directors

239 ballots were cast. The results of the election are as follows:

	For	Against	Abstain
Michael Berry	173	29	28
Nigel Cobb	115	64	44
Susan Davies	107	62	58
John Gaye	134	75	23
Tim Hey	115	88	26
Jeremy Holland	103	66	48
Lesley Howard	185	7	36
Graham MacHarg	138	60	30
Garry Naish	115	47	53
Philip O'Conor	189	12	36
John Potts	60	145	24
Graham Reed	155	45	32
Keith Rushforth	79	87	52
Vanessa Schofield	180	15	34
Keith Scott	150	46	35
Freddie Small	168	27	35
Matthew Tims	143	36	44

According to rule 3.2(viii), the nominations of John Potts and Keith Rushforth for appointment to the Board were not approved.

According to rule 3.2(viii), the following with the greatest number of votes in favour are appointed to the Board:

Michael Berry
 John Gaye
 Lesley Howard
 Graham MacHarg
 Philip O'Conor
 Graham Reed
 Vanessa Schofield
 Keith Scott
 Freddie Small
 Matthew Tims

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the AGM closed at 17.00.

The AGM was followed by a talk by Hilary Redden of The Fibre Lab, Aberdeen, on *Presenting Alpaca Fibre for Sale: Analysing test results*.