



DRAFT

The British Alpaca Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Alpaca Society held at 11.00 am on Saturday 15 March 2008 at the Stoneythorpe Hotel, Warwick Road, Southam, Warwickshire CV47 0HN

1 Chairman's welcome

The Chairman, Graham MacHarg, welcomed all members present, especially those who had travelled a long distance to attend.

2 Apologies for absence

There were 57 members and 2 visitors in attendance. The Society Secretary gave particular apologies from Carole Christian who was standing for appointment to the Board but was unable to be present. Apologies were received from 154 other members.

3 Minutes of the AGM held on 10 March 2007

Nick Harrington-Smith proposed and Liz Butler seconded the approval of the minutes. This was carried unanimously.

4 Chairman's report

The Chairman reported that the past year had been good in parts but overall he felt the Society was moving in the right direction with the Board taking new initiatives. The Society had made every effort to keep members up to date with the regulations concerning Foot and Mouth Disease and Bluetongue and he urged members to comply with these regulations for the protection of all livestock and especially the alpaca community.

He outlined his personal project wish list for the coming year. This included voluntary across-herd genetic evaluation, the introduction of a breed standard for members to aspire towards, voluntary stud male certification including DNA testing and continuing judge training and education courses for members. He commended the British Alpaca Futurity and expressed a hope that the 2008 show season would be able to go ahead.

The Chairman announced the Board's approval of funding for Claire Whitehead at the Royal Veterinary College to undertake a limited Bluetongue vaccine trial.

He noted that there was a busy year ahead and thanked the Society Secretary for her work and support for the Society.

Committee reports had been circulated and the Chairman asked for questions on each in turn.

Education and Training

Anthea Osborn-Jones asked whether it would be possible for BAS judges to be automatically recertified if they provided an annual CV and had been asked to judge at shows. Vanessa Schofield considered that it was difficult to assess a judge's oral reasoning from a CV or from observation at shows.

Fibre

No questions.

Media, Marketing and Magazine

John Gaye used the opportunity to inform members that the Directories would be removed from the new website which would carry no advertising. The membership list was available which put all members on an equal footing.

He has contacted all regional groups about the proposed National Farm Open Day which was designed to raise the awareness of alpacas among the general public. He had received a positive response. It was now being proposed that rather than a specific day, the event would be spread over National Alpaca Week, 13-21 September, with regional groups being able to select the most suitable day for their event. The regional groups will make local arrangements and the Society will make efforts to promote the event nationally. He appealed for anyone with public relations expertise who would be prepared to help support this project to contact him.

Regional Groups and Membership

No questions.

Registration

Keith Scott reported that work had started on the development of a certification scheme which had been requested from the floor at the 2007 AGM.

Richard Beale asked how many cria had been registered over the previous 12 months. Keith replied that there had been 3081 cria registrations. Approximately 3000 had not been registered and Rob Bettinson asked if there were plans to encourage their notification. Keith responded that the notification fee was £5 and members were aware of this. To be credible, the register needs to include all alpacas and registration also bring them within the system from the point of view of welfare issues. Nick Harrington-Smith commented that lack of registration could be due to financial implications. He suggested that males should be registered free of charge and then a significant fee (£100-200) be charged to upgrade them to breeding status. Liz Barlow pointed out that owners with a couple of pet males were not even joining the Society and suggested that the Board should look at introducing a second level of membership and other ways to draw such owners into the Society. Philip O'Connor commented that Defra was becoming more aware of the camelid sector and if the registry is substantially incomplete, Defra could make registration compulsory. During the Foot and Mouth outbreak, Defra had found unregistered animals which owners had apparently been trying to hide. Although it is condition of membership that all animals are registered, this is difficult to police. It was pointed out that by not registering the cria, members devalue the female.

Liz Butler asked if cross-breed could be registered. Keith said this was not possible as it was an alpaca registry. Liz reported that the British Llama Society will register cross-breeds, as all camelids need to be registered. Discussions will be held between the two societies. Di Davies suggested that pet owners should be encouraged to join a regional group and the Society should consider allowing their animals to be registered in order to bring them into the welfare system. Rob Bettinson suggested allowing pet owners to pay a small fee which would entitle them to receive branded e-mails. Richard Beale suggested that BLS animals should be allowed onto the BAS register in a separate section rather than establishing its own register. Defra considered all camelids as a single group.

Jo Porter asked that more pressure be applied to those selling animals to manage the registration process. She had been unable to register cria because the previous owner of the dam had delayed transfer of the animal. Michael Berry pointed out that such a delay was in breach of the BAS Code of Conduct. Ingrid Ruston considered that if the Society does not ensure that all members keep full records of animals and movements, Defra will make it a legal requirement. It is better that members comply on a voluntary basis.

Screening and Importation

Graham Reed reported that Robert Terry had undertaken an audit of the screening process in order to understand it and determine if modification are required. His final report is expected within six months. Twenty-nine breeders who had screened or imported animals over the previous 12 months had been consulted. Others will be included in the next stage of the audit. The next stage is to review the screening criteria. The aim is to ensure that both the process and the criteria comprise a true form and function package. Nick Weber urged the new Board to take this forward urgently and initiate an open debate within the Society.

In response to a question by Melanie Douglas, Keith Scott reported that screening information had never been supplied to those importing animals as the assessment is undertaken on behalf of the Society. There was the possibility that members would try to use screening information or the fact that the animal had been screened by a particular person as part of their marketing. Rob Bettinson pointed out that screening is a minimum standard.

Ingrid Ruston asked why imports are continuing when Mike Safely and Cameron Holt had both said that animals in the UK are among the best in the world. She suggested that we should be promoting the best of British animals. Graham MacHarg responded by reminding members that a number of shows were running classes for Best of British.

Shows

No questions.

Welfare

Nick Harrington-Smith asked why the Society did not appear to be prepared to become involved in disciplining individual members who had broken the code of conduct. Lesley Howard reported that the code was currently being reviewed. Sanctions had been discussed by the Board but it was felt that expelling or suspending a member could in fact be counterproductive.

Liz Butler commented that the committee was the Joint Health and Welfare Committee which covered all camelids. Reports of their meetings are circulated to all concerned.

5 Treasurer's Report, Accounts for years ending 31 December 2006 and 31 December 2007

Freddie Small reported that the Society's finances were sound. The exceptional costs associated with the merger were now complete and an annual payment was being made to British Camelids. Philip O'Connor queried the sharp increase in directors expenses when the number of board members had been reduced.

Freddie explained the arrangements for payment of travelling expenses and noted that in 2007 the expenses claims had been artificially low as some Directors had not claimed within the financial year. The idea of teleconferencing was suggested. Liz Butler reported that this had been tried by the British Llama Society but had proved unsatisfactory. Graham MacHarg agreed that the Board would keep teleconferencing under review. Where appropriate, topics were often discussed using e-mail. Freddie Small proposed and Nick Weber seconded the approval of the accounts. These were carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.50.

6 Election of members to the Board of Directors

149 ballots were cast. The result was extremely close, with a second poll being held to fill the fourth vacancy.

The voting on the first poll was:

	For	Against	Abstain
Richard Beale	100	20	20
Carole Christian	76	38	21
Susan Davies	43	50	40
Jay Holland	76	30	28
Maria Leitner	81	21	34
Mary-Jo Smith	100	25	12
Graham Wright	75	26	35

According to rule 3.2(viii), the nomination of Susan Davies for appointment to the Board was not approved.

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

Richard Beale
Maria Leitner
Mary-Jo Smith

In accordance with rule 3.2(viii), the tie for the fourth place between Carole Christian and Jay Holland was decided by a vote of those present at the meeting. The meeting voted to do this through a paper poll rather than a show of hands and Carole Christian was duly elected with 26 votes. Jay Holland polled 24 votes.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the AGM closed at 16.00.

The AGM was followed by an update on the current situation regarding bTB and Bluetongue by Richard Beale and a talk, *Breeding for the Future – The use of reproductive technologies in alpaca*, by Dr Maria Leitner.