

Cashmere Goat Association

Board of Directors Meeting

June 14, 2020

Attendees: Wendy Pieh, Heidi Dickens, Danielle Fowler, Sister Mary Elizabeth, Elyse Perambo, Ron Fiorica, Pam Haendle

The meeting was called to order by President Wendy Pieh at 7:36 PM.

The minutes for the meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup> were reviewed and approved on a motion by Pam, seconded by Heidi.

Elyse presented the Treasurer's report. Three new members joined CGA this month and several significant bills were paid, including the annual fees to Firefly for the maintenance of the database website. Despite the best efforts of Elyse, with assistance from Wendy, we have been unable to motivate the previous treasurer to close the old bank account and shut down the old PayPal account, where 20 members have old auto-renewals set up. Sister Mary Elizabeth moved that Elyse draft another letter to Jana requesting the closures, and Heidi seconded the motion.

Elyse reported that the COVID 19 virus has caused backlogs at the IRS, but they have received our petition for reinstatement. Our petition has not been processed yet, and will be back logged at the IRS. The fastest way to be reinstated is to submit a 1023 form. Elyse has contacted Gail, an attorney, to ask for her support in the process. The board voted in favor, by email vote, that Gail has permission to work with the CGA to file a 1023 with the IRS. In the future we can file the 990EZ form annually and it allows us to refer to both the current and prior names for the organization.

The board extended its gratitude to Elyse, for patiently dealing with numerous hassles during her tenure as Treasurer.

Pam reported that the database is healthy, with no new problems reported, though there also has been no progress reported on the changes requested in May (to add a path for entries of evaluations that are not to be considered for qualification in the registry). Pam will nudge Jeremy.

Heidi presented the proposal recently put forward by two professors at Langston University. Terry Gipson and his colleague Roger Merkel would like to submit a USDA grant proposal in September for a genomic study, and they have asked CGA to participate in the study by providing data from the lab evaluations in our registry and corresponding DNA samples.

The ultimate purpose of the study would be to identify genes in goat DNA that correlate to specific aspects of cashmere fiber quality, so that cashmere producers could test young stock and select candidates for breeding and candidates for alternate revenue streams – meat, pelts, pets, etc. Langston is seeking a partnership with CGA, and we will need to demonstrate a willingness to contribute time, resources, and funds to the project. Individually, each cashmere producer participating in the study will need to provide a DNA source – a small sample of fiber with the hair follicles intact – taken from a live goat and delivered to the Neogen lab in Nebraska. This sample will be matched with the corresponding lab test results, provided either by the producer or by CGA, through selections from the database. The lab testing should be from the second or third fleece.

Heidi presented the positive aspects of the proposal, touching on the points included in this list from her email to the board:

- Early identification of cull animals vs breeding stock
- Speedy improvement of herd cashmere
- Higher price for certified breeding stock
- Encourages involvement of Langston University (HBC) in Cashmere (and they have a fiber testing lab that is currently idle!)
- Creates pathway for certified quality producer (through an online course Langston would build)
- Improves credentials of our breed & CGA
- Encourages fiber testing
- Future research possibilities
- Builds database
- Collaboration with Spanish Meat Goat producers

Heidi also acknowledged challenges and concerns regarding the proposal. The biggest challenge will be getting data from enough goats for it to be a meaningful study. The Langston professors consider 1,000 goats to be the minimum number. Members would have to commit to the time and hassle involved in getting lab tests done and samples mailed for both high quality cashmere goats and those goats who survive in our barns based solely on their charming personalities. Texas A & M lab testing is reasonable now - \$5 per goat – and the grant may provide some subsidies for lab testing. The grant will cover the entire cost of the DNA analysis and the software to correlate genomic factors with phenotypical elements, but after the study is complete, individual producers would have to pay about \$100 per goat to have their DNA sample analyzed in light of the study's discoveries.

Heidi and Danielle both reminded us that it is entirely possible that the study would not establish any useful links between the genes and the fiber qualities. Danielle has worked with many Genome Wide Association Studies and warned that there are many complications involved and that it may well not be a “slam dunk”. She will examine the detailed proposal when it has been prepared, which will help us assess the prospects.

A letter of intent from CGA is needed this summer – by August. The grant proposal must be submitted in September. If Langston receives the grant at the end of the year, DNA collection would need to take place over the next 18 months.

We discussed ways to motivate members to participate. We might provide a kit with clippers and a video showing the sampling processes. At a minimum, we will work on educating members on engaging with Texas A & M for testing.

Pam made a motion to send the letter of intent to Terry Gipson; Sister Mary Elizabeth seconded the motion; motion passed. A survey will go out to members this summer, asking about interest in this project as well as interest in the virtual sale “booth” for Rhinebeck, and a virtual show for youth. We will ask Christine to contact someone in the Spanish Meat Goat Association, and we may engage with other goat associations.

#### Committee reports:

Judging: Nothing new to report this month

Annual goat show: Sister Mary Elizabeth reported that the show committee had met to discuss both a new location for the annual live goat show and the prospects for a virtual show for young people. The Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival will not be held this year, and we no longer have adequate space there for all of our goats. Cameron has been searching for another site, and the committee recommended that the search continue, for 2021. No CGA live goat show will be held this year. Sister also explained that the committee recommended that we pursue sponsoring a virtual Cashmere Goat Showmanship Competition for youth. Peter and Wendy have agreed to serve as judges, and the show will be open to any young person (up to age 18?) who can submit a fleece and a video showing them working with their goat. The fleece assessment would form the basis for entry of the goat in the registry, but the overall judging would also be based on the showmanship exhibited by the child (which could include a demonstration of the goat's special skills or possibly the exhibitor's workmanship in a textile craft) as well as the entrant's knowledge of cashmere goats. The knowledge may be tested in a Zoom meeting with the judges. A new form for the virtual goat show entries will be created, invitations for participants will go out on Facebook, and the rules will go out on a new page on the CGA website. We will aim to have all videos submitted by the end of the summer and will work toward putting together a montage of the submitted videos for display on the website and/or the platform used for our virtual Rhinebeck sales. Sister moved that we proceed with this effort; Pam seconded; motion passed.

Rhinebeck booth: Elyse reported that the Rhinebeck festival will be held only as a virtual event this year, so she has been researching the sites set up by other virtual fiber festivals, including Maryland Sheep & Wool. They have an online link for each vendor organized by product type. Our link could lead to a page on our website or to a new website. Some website builders offer a package that can be embedded into an existing website. We need more information – about the impact of having a sale page, even a temporary one, on our 501©3 status, about Rhinebeck's plans, and about the possibility of showing the videos from the virtual show on the sale site. Sister Mary Elizabeth moved that we include a question about interest in a virtual sale booth on the survey; Pam seconded; motion passed.

Social Media: Danielle reported that activity on our Facebook page continues to flourish. Recent posts have focused on trainable goats and cashmere goats in different environments.

Pam reminded everyone that an issue of Hoofprints should come out this summer. Articles are welcome anytime, with a hard deadline of July 31.

Ron reported that all live goat shows on the west coast have been cancelled, but the NWCA will probably be able to go forward with the fleece competition. He will confirm that at an upcoming NWCA meeting. Both NWCA and CGA will hold their annual meetings via Zoom.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.