

President's report

On 17 to 19 November 2006 I attended the AAA National Council meeting in Melbourne, made up of the 14 regional presidents together with the National Committee (NatCom). It was a highly focussed 3 -day and I found it a very useful and productive time.

AAFL

On Friday the weekend started with a visit to the fleece company, AAFL, where we saw their operations and products and met the people involved. We had the opportunity of discussing queries and concerns that we as growers have with our experience of AAFL.

I left this meeting with at least a clearer understanding of AAFL's aims and objectives, and how we the breeders and AAFL can - and it perhaps at this stage must - support each other, if we want to see a long term future for an alpaca fleece industry in Australia.

I did come away with the impression that AAFL is genuinely trying to improve our experience of sending fleece to them and do whatever they can to get the fleece out of our sheds and into theirs. We will be working of these issues at a regional level over the coming months.

Regional presidents' meeting

The following day started at eight am with a meeting of the 14 regional presidents, where we discussed issues we wanted to raise with NatCom. A variety of topics came up – ranging from changing showing rules to allow sale of animals, to a request for stewards' and convenors' training courses, to the vexed question of regional boundaries.

All issues formulated by the presidents were subsequently discussed with NatCom in the course of the weekend and, where appropriate, referred to the relevant sub-committee. Mid-morning we joined the NatCom members and the Council meeting began.

Council meeting

There was a very extensive two day agenda and the new NatCom president Ian Davison ran the meeting impressively - I believe we are fortunate to have someone of Ian's calibre as the new president of our Association. Other NatCom members were similarly inspiring and it was a very positive and forward-looking meeting.

I won't detail the whole Council meeting here but I am of course very happy to provide further details to anyone interested. Some highlights relevant to the region:

Organisational structure

There was discussion relating to the proposal that the AAA change from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee. It was acknowledged that some information provided to members previously, regarding the limitations of the current structure, was incorrect (eg personal liability of members) as a result of poor legal advice received at the time.

I became aware that although it had seemed - to me - that the proposal was being rushed through when previously presented, it had actually been in the planning stages for about two years. The apparent rush may have been largely a function of poor communication with members.

Members will soon all receive an explanatory statement discussing the issues and we will have the opportunity to discuss these at our regional meetings before the proposal goes to a national vote.

Marketing initiative

Robert Gane, the new NatCom member responsible for marketing, has agreed to travel to each region to conduct one-day workshops on marketing and selling alpacas. He will do this as a volunteer and his out-of-pocket expenses will be funded by national office.

Regional boundaries

There was discussion about some regional boundaries being now inappropriate for historical reasons. This was particularly so in NSW. It was agreed that the NSW presidents would get together to discuss these issues. I will let members know and request input when this meeting has been arranged.

Mobile NatCom meetings

The president suggested that some NatCom meetings could be held in other regions, and invited requests for this from the regions. This would enable any interested members from the host region to attend as observers, to gain a better understanding of how NatCom functions. I intend to take up this offer and request a NatCom meeting in our region.