

Final Minutes
Virginia Sheep Industry Board
January 7, 2022 - 1:00 PM
Mrs. Rowe's Family Restaurant
Staunton, VA

Presiding: Mac Swortzel

Roll Call:

Members Present

Jason Shiflet
Mandy Fletcher
James Hilleary
Larry Weeks
James Mumaw
Tim Mize
Mac Swortzel

Members Absent

Matthew Miller
Clinton Bell
Alvin Thomas
Lawson Roberts
Rosalea Potter

Staff Present

Matthew Sponaugle, Program Manager, VDACS, Harrisonburg

Others Presents

Chad Fox, USDA Wildlife Serv.
Scott Greiner, Virginia Tech
Cecil King

This meeting was held in conjunction with the Virginia Sheep Producer Association Board Meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 10, 2020 meeting were approved as written.

Financial Report

Matthew Sponaugle reviewed the FY 20-21 report, which showed an ending balance of \$51,383.70. Income for the FY 20-21 was \$13,309.03 up \$1,012.92 from the FY 19-20 and up \$890.20 from the FY 18-19. Total expenditures for the FY 20-21 were \$4,049.83. Expenditures were down due to a limited FY 20-21 budget set at the January 10, 2020 meeting and COVID restrictions around the state.

OLD BUSINESS:

USDA Wildlife Services Report – Chad Fox

Chad reported that demand for USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (WS) was steady this year. Their seven employee team allowed them to cover all Virginia counties, as coyote populations have been spreading into new areas of the state. Coyote numbers appear to have peaked. Due to COVID-19 WS did not conduct in person educational programs during FY 2021. Two programs were provided over Zoom to 21 participants.

WS provided direct control services to 133 livestock farms in 44 counties in federal fiscal year (FY) 2021. During FY2021, 101 sheep, 27 calves, and 41 goats were reported and verified killed by coyotes. Additionally, 52 sheep and 27 cattle/calves were reported and verified killed by black vultures. In FY2021, the average number of sheep killed per farm by coyotes was 2.4. Preventative control was conducted on 66 livestock farms with historic coyote predation. WS removed coyotes on these farms before livestock depredation occurred, and these farms had no losses in FY2021. Corrective control was conducted on 67 livestock farms to remove coyotes killing livestock. In FY2021, WS removed 136 coyotes on farms to stop or prevent coyote predation on livestock. The program received 78 request for assistance to reduce black bear predation to livestock. Black Bear predation was recorded in 17 counties including 21 sheep, 18 cattle/calves, and 4 goats.

Though funding for USDA Wildlife Services was budgeted for the FY 20-21 at the amount of \$7,500, payment was not made. The board doubled the USDA WS funding amount to \$15,000 for the FY 21-22.

Wool Marketing Incentive

Cecil King, president of the New River Valley Sheep and Goat Club, gave a report on the Southwest Virginia Wool Marketing Initiative Program. In 2019, a group of producers purchased a used wool baler from the Maryland Sheep and Wool Producers Association in order to help add value to local producer's wool. Seventy-two producers used the baler at local wool pools in the summer of 2021, baling approximately 65,000 lbs. of wool. Producers were paid 40 cents per pound for wool with a cost of 8 cents per lb. to bale. The 65,000 lbs was the accumulation of the 2020 & 2021 shearing season, as they did not bale any wool in 2020 due to COVID. Necessary repairs are currently being made to the baler and the group is in hopes of purchasing or building a new baler in the future.

Virginia State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest Report

Scott Greiner provided the report, which indicated that nearly 3,600 lambs have been evaluated through the program since its inception in 1999. In the 23rd year of the program, the Virginia State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest continues to provide feedback to lamb exhibitors and breeders relative to the impact of their genetics and management on carcass performance. This report helps show improvements made by producers and feeders. 2021 carcass data showed lambs that were both heavier muscled (averaging 3.97 sq. in. loin eye area), leaner (.28 inches adj. fat thickness), and a higher percent Boneless Closely Trimmed Retail Cuts (48.7% average BCTRC) than any set of lambs in the past 5 years. The \$1,000 provided by the Board (FY 20) helps fund the \$2,500 + premiums that are paid to participants, rewarding them for premium carcasses. The average carcass premium ranges from \$10 to \$50 per head dependent upon carcass ranking. Several board members expressed the value the program provides to lamb breeders, growers, and consignors.

The Virginia State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest was not budgeted in the FY 20-21 due to no meeting in 2021; however, the board decided to fund it again in 2022 at \$1,500.

Carcass Educational Support

The Augusta Market Animal Show ultra-sounded 87 lambs in May 2021. All information was put into an excel sheet, ranked, and distributed to the showmen and families at their annual awards banquet along with the recognition of the winners. The carcass contest allows the MAS exhibitors to receive carcass data on their live show animals, giving them an indication of how they would rank from a commercial standpoint.

The Fredrick County 4-H Livestock judging team traveled to compete at the 2020 National Western Stock Show Livestock Judging Contest in Denver, CO. The team received the invitation to represent Virginia at the contest after winning the Virginia State 4-H Livestock judging contest in June of 2019. The team ended up winning the National Contest with multiple individuals placing in the top 10.

The VSIB started a social media campaign in the FY 20-21 by hiring Ionic Interactive Media of Lexington, VA to create and maintain a Facebook page. Ionic provided three post a week to the FB page as well as any original content that was provided to her from the VSPA or VSIB. Many post pertaining to all things sheep were made throughout the year including both local and national content. As of January 2022, the page had 187 likes. In addition, it reached over 1,180 viewers in the same period. The board decided to continue the FB page for an additional year and discussed ways to help improve the outreach of the page.

NEW BUSINESS:

Action on Spending Requests

New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club – Cecil King

Cecil King of the New River Valley Sheep and Goat Club (NRVSGC) made two financial request to the board. First, a request of funds to support the Greatest of All Time sheep and goat festival that was hosted by the club in Draper, VA. This was the first year for this event with over 2,400 people attending. A few features of the festival included the representation of 22 sheep breeds, the serving of lamb samples, and the sale of multiple products derived from sheep. The festival received much media coverage including TV, newspaper, and radio. The festival cost around \$9,700 to host with an income of just over \$4,500. Cecil requested \$1,500 to help fund the event in the fall of 2022. The board voted to grant \$2,000 to support the 2022 festival.

Second, Cecil requested the funds of \$1,000 to purchase sacs for their wool baler. This money would cover approximately half of the cost of the total number of sacs needed. Each sac cost around \$13. The board declined the request.

VA 4-H Livestock Judging

The board received a funding request from Katherine Carter for support of the Virginia 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team that recently won the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville, KY. The top two teams at the national contest receive an invitation to compete in the Royal Highland Stock Show Livestock Evaluation Contest in Edinburgh, Scotland. It is estimated to cost \$7,500 per person to send the team to this competition in 2022. If, the team is unable to travel abroad this year due to COVID restrictions, they plan to take a state side tour to replace the opportunity. This trip would include an inside and up-close view of US livestock production that these young people have likely not encountered such as large scale feedlots and harvest facilities. The board agreed to provide \$2,000 in the FY 21-22 for this travel request and \$500 in the FY 22-23 the cost of travel to the national contest in Louisville.

Carcass Educational Support

The carcass educational support line item was added to the FY 20-21 budget to help support local clubs and organizations looking to promote lamb carcass education, most often through ultra-sounding county fair lambs and using the data to organize a carcass contest. The board voted to fund proposed projects at the rate of \$5 per animal with a maximum of 100 animals. In

order to receive funding, local clubs need to submit a request letter along with an invoice to the VSPA program manager and chairperson. The board budgeted \$1,500 for the FY 21-22 and \$1,000 for the FY 22-23 under this line item.

4-H / FFA Youth Development Sponsorship

The board designated a line item titled “4-H / FFA Youth Development Sponsorship” and funded it at \$1,000 for both the FY 21-22 and FY 22-23. These funds are intended to support Virginia youth who win state level competitions (related to the sheep industry) and receive invitation to travel to upper level competition as a result. These funds are designed for teams outside of the VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team. Grants submissions should be turned into the board for approval.

Other items

Though no official request was made, Jason Shiflett brought up the Virginia Jr. Sheep Breeders Association (VJSBA) and the new challenges that they were facing with fundraising. The VJSBA allows youth members to meet and interact with one another around the state. Their main even revolves around a junior breeding show held in August at the Rockingham County Fair. The group has traditionally fundraised by setting up food booths at different sheep events including the I81 Showdown, the Virginia Bred Ewe sale, and Steels Tavern Ram Test Station sale. With some of these events transitioning into virtual or hybrid events as a result of COVID, the VJSBA has taken a large cut in fund raising that they put toward their annual show. It was requested that the board keep the VJSBA in mind for funding if they continue to see declined fundraising results.

Dr. Scott Greiner brought up potential repair need of the two ram test stations in the state, Steels Tavern and Glade Spring. Both serve the industry by placing rams on a performance test, followed by a public sale. Many commercial producers in the region rely upon these test stations to make breeding decisions. These rams serve as a critical component of promoting performance based rams, offering EBVs or Estimated Breeding Values to producers. No formal request was made for assistance to the test stations.

A motion was made by Tim Mize, seconded by Jason Shiflett, to approve the FY2021-2022 and FY 2022-2023 Budget with the following project spending categories.

FY 2021-2022

Meeting Expense	\$2,000.00
Agency Service Charge	\$ 175.00
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$1,000.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$15,000.00
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$ 500.00
VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team	\$ 2,000.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$ 1,500.00
4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$ 1,000.00
Social Media Campaign	\$ 500.00

FY2022-2023

Meeting Expenses	\$2,000.00
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Agency Service Charge	\$ 175.00
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$1,000.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$7,500.00
NRV Sheep & Goat Club (Goat Festival)	\$2,000.00
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$ 500.00
VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team	\$ 500.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$1,000.00
4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$1,000.00
Social Media Campaign	\$1,000.00

The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Public Comment: None

Future Meeting Date

The next meeting is planned to be held in conjunction with the 2022 Steels Tavern Ram Test Sale in Raphine, VA. Official date and time to be determined.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Sponaule, Secretary