

Draft Minutes
Virginia Sheep Industry Board
January 4, 2024 - 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
Clinton Bell
Tim Mize
Mac Swortzel
Lee Wright
James Mumaw

Members Absent

Rosalea Potter
Lawson Roberts
Alvin Thomas

Staff Present

Matthew Sponaugle, Program Manager, VDACS, Harrisonburg
Melissa Ball, VDACS

Others Presents

Kyle Waters, USDA Wildlife Serv.	John Benner, VCE Augusta Co.
Scott Greiner, Virginia Tech	Daniel May
Jennifer McClellan, NRV Sheep & Goat Club	Gary Hornbaker
Jason Geesman	Tom Stanley
Dave Shiflett	

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 6, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Annual Report

The Annual Report for the FY22-23 was reviewed and approved by the board as presented.

Financial Report

Matthew Sponaugle reviewed the FY 22-23 report, which showed an ending balance of \$47,826. Income for the FY 22-23 was \$19,009.25 up \$3,232 from the FY 21-22 and up \$5,700 from the FY 20-21. Total expenditures for the FY 22-23 were \$15,736.19.

OLD BUSINESS

Program Reports:

USDA Wildlife Services Report – Kyle Waters

Kyle reported that demand for USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services (WS) was steady this year. Their seven employee team allowed them to cover all Virginia counties. WS presented at 9 educational programs in FY2023, attended by 322 people. WS provided direct control services to 133 livestock farms in federal fiscal year (FY) 2023. During FY2023, 269 sheep, 17 calves, and 19 goats were reported and verified killed by coyotes. Additionally, 75 sheep, 26 cattle/calves, and 7 goats were reported and verified killed by black vultures. In FY2023, the average number of sheep killed per farm by coyotes was 4.5. Preventative control was conducted on 59 livestock farms with historic coyote predation. WS removed coyotes on these farms before livestock depredation occurred, and these farms had no losses in FY2023. Corrective control was conducted on 74 livestock farms to remove coyotes killing livestock. In FY2023, WS removed 152 coyotes on farms to stop or prevent coyote predation on livestock. The program received 249 request for assistance to reduce black bear predation to livestock. Black Bear predation was recorded in 11 counties including 21 sheep, 5 cattle/calves, and 2 goats. In FY2022 WS has purchased 14 wireless game cameras to assist with producers checking traps. This new program has been very successful. In FY2023 WS wishes to add to its hardware, expanding the capabilities to other producers.

In FY2023, the Virginia Cooperative Wildlife Damage Management Program (CWDMP) began managing a new black vulture permit system. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service (VDACS) obtained a statewide black vulture permit which allows the sub-permitting of eligible farmers. During FY2023, the CWDMP issued sub-permits to 87 farmers allowing them to efficiently and effectively manage black vulture damage.

Carcass Educational Support

The Augusta Market Animal Show ultra-sounded 65 lambs in May 2023 and the Rockingham County Fair ultra-sounded 37 lambs in August 2023. All information was put into an excel sheet, ranked, and distributed to the showers and families at their annual awards banquet along with the recognition of the winners. The carcass contest allows exhibitors to receive carcass data on their live show animals, giving them an indication of how they would rank from a commercial standpoint.

NRV Sheep & Goat Club – GOAT Festival

Jennifer McClellan gave a report on the New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club's G.O.A.T (Greatest of All Time) Festival held at the New River Valley Fair Grounds in Dublin, VA. The festival took place in September 2023 and drew over 1,500 spectators with very rainy weather conditions. Events included multiple different sheep breed displays, lamb products for sale, and lamb samples to festival goers. Over 150 volunteers played a role in making the festival a success and 16 new members joined the club through the festival. The next G.O.A.T Festival is scheduled for September 28, 2024.

Website

The VSIB partnered with the Virginia Sheep Producers Association (VSPA) to create and host a new website. Larry Weeks reported that the website had been designed and was up and running. The site contains 5 pages including a Sheep Industry Board page. The VSIB has meeting minutes, Annual Reports, and a list of Board members on their page. In the future, the Board plans to list upcoming meeting notices as well as grant announcements. The website has been very well received and Larry has much excitement for the plans of growth to the site.

NEW BUSINESS:

Action on Spending Requests

VSPA Website

The VSPA expects an annual cost of \$50 per month to host the website. The Board voted to budget \$600 annually to help support the website in FY23-24 and FY24-25. The Board plans to continue using the website to share information such as minutes, grant opportunities, and reports.

New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club – Jennifer McClellan

Jennifer McClellan requested support of the 2023 NRV Sheep & Goat Club's G.O.A.T Festival to be held in September 2024. The 2023 festival came with great cost as the club had to rent out larger facilities to host the event. The festival is expected to continue to grow and is a good way to promote sheep and lamb products to a large crowd of both present and potential consumers.

VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging Team

The Board budgeted \$1,000 for the Virginia State winning 4-H Livestock Judging team to practice and travel to competitions. This year's team recently won the National Livestock Judging Contest at the North American International Livestock Expo in Louisville, KY and will be traveling to Ireland in the summer of 2024 to represent the U.S. It is expected to cost over \$8,000 a kid to travel.

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 continue funding 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.

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 23-24 and FY 24-25. 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 VSPA program manager and chairperson for approval.

Coalfield Sheep Association

The Coalfield Sheep Association presented a grant request in the amount of \$1,000 to support the 3rd Annual Coalfield Sheep Association Sale and regional sheep educational program to be held on August 16 & 17, 2024. The sale is held at the Coalfield Agriculture Center and was attended by producers representing 9 different states in 2022. The money would be used to add an educational event prior to the sale and support an online bidding platform. After much discussion and hesitation to fund the online bidding part, Tim Mize made a motion to approve up to \$500 to be spent on educational program/component, pending an approval of a more detailed budget by the VSIB Chairman. Lee Wright 2nd and motion was approved.

Other items

The Board agreed to work with the Virginia Sheep Producers Association to develop a brand / logo to help represent the Virginia sheep industry. This will be used by the VSIB in promotion and display units as well as listed on documents created with grant funds. The Board approved \$1,000 under the budget line item “VSPA Brand Development” for the FY23-24 for this line item.

The Board budgeted \$2,000 for the FY23-24 under the line item “General Marketing Promotion” to purchase a display unit for the Board.

A motion was made by Tim Mize, seconded by Lee Wright, to approve the FY2023-2024 and FY 2024-2025 Budget with the following project spending categories.

FY 2023-2024

Meeting Expense	\$2,000.00
Agency Service Charge	\$ 250.00
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$1,000.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$10,000.00
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$ 500.00
VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team	\$ 1,000.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$ 1,500.00
4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$ 1,000.00
NRV Sheep & Goat Club (Goat Festival)	\$2,000.00
VSPA (Website project)	\$ 600.00
VSPA Brand Development	\$1,000.00
General Marketing Promotion	\$2,000.00

FY2024-2025

Meeting Expenses	\$2,000.00
Agency Service Charge	\$ 250.00
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$ 500.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$10,000.00
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$ 500.00
VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging Team	\$1,000.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$1,500.00

4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$1,000.00
NRV Sheep & Goat Club (Goat Festival)	\$2,000.00
VSPA (website project)	\$ 600.00
Coalfield Sheep Association	\$ 500.00

The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

The Board discussed adopting a policy to allow electronic meetings. After some discussion, Time Mize made a motion to adopt the drafted policy presented by Matthew Sponaule. Lee Wright seconded, and the motion passed. The new policy is to be updated to the Board handbook.

The board also discussed developing a new set of Grant Guidelines that could be posted on the website. Lee Wright agreed to work with Matt Sponaule to draft a set for the Board to review at their next meeting.

Public Comment: None

Future Meeting Date

There was no decision made on future meetings at this time.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Sponaule, Secretary