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**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF**

**THE VALAIS BLACKNOSE SOCIETY**

**9th October 2023 (Virtual Meeting) 7pm**

**Draft Minutes**

**Present**: Raymond Irvine (Chairman),Jamie Wood (Vice Chairman) Chirs Slee (Vice Chairman), Phil Garrod, Polly Glyde, Kate Little, Adam Kirkbride, Steve Dace, Tom Hooper and Melissa Christie.

**In attendance**: None

The meeting was chaired by Jamie Wood (Vice Chairman) due to the Chairman being unwell.

**Minute No. 2023/**

**136. Apologies:** None

**137. Minutes from the Meeting held on 11th September 2023:** These were agreed and signed by the Vice Chairman. Proposed by Steve Dace and seconded by Phil Garrod.

**138. Confidentiality of Council Meetings:** Noted

**138. Election of Chairman:** Raymond Irvine was duly elected as Chairman for the next year. Proposed by Polly Glyde and seconded by Jamie Wood.

**139. Election of Vice Chairman:** After deciding to only have one vice chairman going forward, Jamie Wood was duly elected for the next year. Proposed by Chris Slee and seconded by Adam Kirkbride.

**140. AGM Debrief:** It was felt that the meeting had gone well, and no complaints had been received subsequently.

**141. Society Grading Events and Shows and Sales:**

* **Dates and Venues for 2024:**

1. The Northern Ireland grading event will take place on 25th May, just after the Balmoral Show. Venue to be confirmed.
2. The Southern Grading and Show and Sale event will be combined into a two day event, possibly to be held at Monmouth market (subject to confirmation), on 19th and 20th July.
3. The Blacknose Beauties event will take place on 16th and 17th August at Carlisle Mart. Format to be confirmed.
4. A Scottish grading event will be held probably at Stirling Market on a date to be confirmed with the Scottish Regional Club. The Chairman to liaise.
5. Question about whether the Skipton grading event will be required given the above.
6. Put this information on the website and perhaps next year add it to the calendar.

* **Grading events in the USA**

The Society has been asked to send graders to two events, the VBISBAR show on 13th-15th September and the Scott Starkweather event on 19th - 21st September. It was agreed that the former was of insufficient size to justify sending over of two graders, but the latter, a much bigger event, could be supported. Secretary to write to explain the decision.

* **Pre Inspections at Shows and Sales**

It was agreed that in future all sheep entered for Society and Regional Club Sales must be checked for satisfactory teeth, testicles and toes. This is an objective, not a subjective judgement. A failure in any category will mean that the sheep cannot go forward into the sale ring. Need to make sure this is put in sales catalogues and on our website, so everybody is clear about this.

* **Grading Cards and the Website**

Everybody has now been sent their grading cards and the schedules have been completed. The results and maximum points list for BB23 is on the website. The other shows will follow shortly.

**142. Agricultural Shows:** Requests are starting to come in for the royal/county shows both for 2024 and 2025, which only A/A+ panel judges can do. The following nominations were agreed:

* **Highland Show:** 2024 Julian Walters

2025 Jamie Wood

* **Balmoral Show:** 2024 David Hodge
* **Devon County Show:** 2024 Raymond Irvine

2025 Heather Allen

* **Great Yorkshire Show:** 2024 Phil Garrod (reserve Raymond Irvine)

2025 Raymond Irvine (reserve Jamie Wood)

Polly to pull together the judges’ list for the other royal/county and day shows, to be circulated. These can then be sent out on request by individual shows.

**143. Swiss Grading:**

* **Unaffiliated Graders:** It is the normal practice for those society members who wish to become a society affiliated grader to first work their way through the judge’s pathway. This involves being selected for training on the basis of vbn breeding experience and stockmanship skills, showing success and attendance at Swiss vbn events. Once selected, the trainee judge is mentored by an existing A/A+ panel judge by shadowing at one or more shows. If successfully signed off, they become a B Panel judge able to judge at day shows. Joining the A Panel comes as a result of judging experience. Being sent for Swiss training is by invitation of the Society only, after which they become A+ judges/Graders, able to judge at Royal shows.

There was concern that the actions of the four UK members who attended the recent Swiss grading training event, did so on their at their own volition, without reference to the Society’s judge’s pathway set out above. There is a risk that this might be seen as a precedent for others (including those with no background or experience in judging or indeed successfully breeding livestock) to attempt to bypass the correct approach to becoming an affiliated grader.

**Consequently the Council resolved** that any member not on the judge’s pathway, or a member who has only reached the B panel, or an A panel judge who has not been invited by the Society to go for Swiss training, will not be recognised as an affiliated grader. As such their grading scores for sheep will not be acknowledged by the Society or recorded in the society flock book. In addition, progress onto or within the judge’s pathway may be delayed, at the discretion of the Council.

* **Request for a Society Grading Training Event in Switzerland in 2024:** The Society is currently seeking a grading training event in early 2024. Awaiting a response.
* **Grader’s Rules:** In the light of the above, these will need to be made more explicit and put on the website.

**144. Trainee Judge’s Update:** Seven candidates have been selected by the graders, from the 20 applicants. The successful candidates will be notified shortly. The training event will take place on 18th November 2023, at Steve Dace’s farm. Phil Garrod and Jamie Wood will be the assessing judges, with the Chairman arbitrating as necessary.

**145. ET Policy:**

* **Conservation Panel Arrangements:** This will be dealt with at a later date.
* **Question submitted:** Can ET lambs born outside the UK and subsequently imported be registered in the UK flock book, after 1st January 2024? The Council agreed that the answer is ‘no’.

**146. Annual Magazine:** Given the concern Grassroots expressed about the timetable, cost and inconvenience of last year’s magazine, the last few only just going out as late memberships come in, this needs rethinking. The following actions are needed:

1. Set up a direct debit system to ensure that all subscriptions are paid in January, giving us an up to date set of membership data. Steve to liaise with Libby at Grassroots.
2. Create a list of items (Polly and Mel) for the chairman to check.
3. Seek quotes on an A5 version, using recycled paper.
4. Liaise with the designer.
5. Decide on printing and publication dates, probably February, once the subscriptions are in. That effectively sets the deadline for articles to allow the designer time to put the magazine together and proof reading.

**147. 2024 Elections:** A sub committee comprising Adam, Kate and Steve will draw up the nomination criteria and election rules. Report to the next meeting.

**148. Correspondence:**

1. It was decided that the Society would not write in support of a planning application for an agricultural dwelling, decisions about which are judged on strict criteria relating to the viability of the business involved, not the breed of sheep being raised.
2. The new panel B judges for 2024 (having been mentored in 2023) will be notified shortly.
3. The list of maximum point sheep in 2023 will be put on the website.
4. The Society will write in support of the new Sheep Welfare Strategy.

**149. Finance:**

* **Charity Donation at BB23:** A total of £7,803 derived from the auction of two lambs kindly donated by Jamie Wood and Steve Dace and the raffle takings were donated to the Charlie Dallas Lancaster Foundation (charity no. 1195207).
* **Bank account:** Currently stands at £51,300, the same as at the beginning of the year.
* **Xero reconciliations:** Grassroots is currently assisting with this.
* The accounts have been submitted to Companies House following approval by the Directors and those members who attended the AGM.

**150. Any Other Business:**

1. A notice will be put on the website to announce that Emma Hughes has resigned as our maternity cover secretary and online shop co-ordinator and that for the moment Kate and Polly will cover the secretary’s work. Mel will run the online shop.
2. Stock in the online shop. There is currently too much merchandise which is not moving. We need to do a promotion in the run up to Christmas and in future keep less stock.
3. Articles on breeders for the magazine – It was agreed that Council members should not be prevented from having articles about them just on the basis of their being on the Council.
4. The Chairman strongly reinforced the need for Council members not to discuss personnel matters outside Council meetings. Such matters are confidential, particularly as they relate to the Council’s role as an employer.

**Part II (Confidential Item)**

The Chairman and Phil Garrod declared an interest in the item and left the meeting.

1. **Worcester Grading Event Dispute**: **It was unanimously resolved** that a ‘yellow card’ warning would be issued to the relevant entrants, to apply until the end of 2024.

Signed:………………………………………….. Date:……………………………

Vice Chairman of the VBN Society