

American Milking Devon Cattle Association

Minutes of the Annual Membership Meeting
Tunbridge VT, May 10, 2009

The meeting was called to order by President John Hall at 10:10 AM with 20 members present. A MOTION (Clark/Berglund) to accept the minutes of the May 10, 2008 annual meeting as corrected was seconded and passed unanimously.

Reports

President: John Hall summarized the Board's activities during 2008, including adoption of an embryo transplant policy, organizing a Fall gathering at Williamsburg attended by 30 people, and concluding a contact with Texas A&M for DNA testing as required by the Board for identity verification. John noted an amendment to the ET policy stipulating that DNA test results would be used for identification only; no claims relating to animal performance will be made. Members are free to arrange with Texas A&M (or another lab) to have their own tests done for other purposes.

Treasurer: John distributed and summarized the income and expense statement for calendar 2008. Our balance at year end was \$10,650.51. A MOTION (Blaiklock/Berglund) to accept the Treasurer's report was unanimously adopted.

Registration: Sue Randall reported that total registrations since the herd book was established total 2361 animals including 1679 cows and 682 bulls. Census results so far have confirmed 1141 living cows and 350 bulls. (Sue will be working to conclude the census this Summer.) In 2008 there were 263 new registrations and 174 transfers.

Sue noted that the Board had established a fee for replacing a lost registration certificate, in response to increasing requests for replacements. Members were urged to keep these certificates in a safe place, as they would any other valuable document.

Communications: Bill Blaiklock thanked Lawrence Gilley for his ongoing service to AMDCA as web servant, and Bonnie Hall for taking over the newsletter. Over the next year we hope to deliver the newsletter by e-mail to those who are equipped to receive it in digital form. In response to a question Bill emphasized e-mail is optional; anyone wanting a paper copy will get one. The newsletter will also be posted on the web site. The consensus was that two newsletters a year are enough.

Bill asked if the Board minutes should be posted on the web site. Opinion was divided; we have never been asked for a paper copy. However, it is a source of information to new and prospective members. We will post them on a trial basis.

Bill is continuing efforts to enlist ALBC as a fiscal agent to receive tax-exempt donations on behalf of AMDCA.

Genetics: Ray advised that Sunny Knoll's Gabe has been added to the semen bank; There are now seven bulls available. We are still looking to draw bulls who will expand the genetic base represented in the bank. One straw from every bull has been sent to Texas A&M for DNA profiling. It was noted there are patent protection issues in connection with the A2 gene. Be careful if you are marketing this trait.

Bruce Balch asked how genetics might be used to identify good milk production bulls? Ray noted that genetics per se are not the best indicator; look to DHIA testing for this information. Concern was expressed about over-emphasis on milk production to the detriment of the traditional triple purpose character, others noted that milk production has been neglected in favor of draft characteristics. It was noted that AMD cows can produce twice as much solids (fat?) as Jerseys, a trait of great value to cheese makers. John noted that the Board had discussed forming a subcommittee of milk producers, including one or more Directors to pursue and collect milk production data.

Ray noted that Jeremy Michaud has been successful (on the second try) in getting USDA to assign a DHIA designator ("MD") to the American Milking Devon breed.

Election of Directors: The ballot count was announced: Sue Randall-31, William Blaiklock-29, Jeremy Michaud-25, Elaine Shirley-15. Sue, William and Jeremy stand elected.

Speaker: Shannon Nichols, President of the American Kerry Cattle Association described her efforts to get more attention focussed on NE rare breeds. Her attempt to get ALBC to open a New England regional office has been delayed by lack of funding. She has created a strategic plan emphasizing milk genotyping, cheese making within traditional NE dairy breeds. An alternative is to create a new regional organization, which could establish a mentoring program (Ray, Drew), act as a local fiscal agent, support cheese makers and micro creameries. Some expressed doubt about the viability of a new group. John committed the Board to think about these alternatives.

NACE: In response to a question concerning AMDCA's position on NACE, it was noted that we had anticipated an approach by USDA seeking our cooperation, but so far that has not happened. Shannon felt that it was inevitable but Doug Flack noted some success in opposing it. Ray commented that "they already know..." citing satellite photography among other information sources. There is a valid need to track animals in the event of disease. Members asked to be notified of any USDA approach to AMDCA.

Raw milk: John reported that Connecticut is considering a ban on raw milk sales. However, it was also reported that Vermont and New Hampshire have both liberalized their raw milk laws.

Herd book: In response to a question Sue reported that she hoped to have the herd book updated by late Summer. New software is required to reduce the file sizes produced by her current database program. It was suggested that DHIA numbers be listed in addition to tattoo numbers.

Tee shirts: John noted that the tee shirt order deadline has been extended to allow orders to be placed at this meeting. (Several did so.) After that we will add and hold in inventory additional items necessary to meet the minimum quantity.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM. Several went on to Bruce Balch's farm restaurant where Bruce and Chris provided a great lunch. Thanks also to Erin Ackerman-Leist for sharing her farm cheese at the meeting.

William C. Blaiklock, Secretary