

SSS Wool Group Minutes
Shepherds Hotel, Cockermouth, Cumbria
26 June 2015, 16.00-18.00

Present: Mary Gibbings (Chair), Cluny Chapman, Hazel Syme, Lynn Collison (via internet), Sally Wild, Simonie Fowler, Sue Petrie, Eva Fairnell,(Minute-taker).

1 Apologies

None

2 Shows

It was noted that the various members involved in running Society stalls at Wool events worked really hard to make them such a success. However it was agreed unanimously that the Protocol needs to be more carefully worded regarding fleece standards and also trading standards. The Protocol should be explicit regarding the characteristics of Shetland fleece and that the Organiser should very diplomatically reject fleece that do not meet these requirements. Also in order to make sure fleece for sale are not in breach of trading standards, they should state original flock details.

3 Carrier Bags (Committee minutes item 7, page 7)

It was agreed that the use of bags provided by the Society led to a tidy and professional image for the stall. However, issues were raised about who pays for those bags. The logistics of accounting for the cost of the bags for the stall organiser is unduly complicated, particularly if a fleece is not sold as the bag cannot be reused and the fleece supplier may see no need to pay for it. As the cost per show may amount to no more than £30, it was agreed unanimously that it would be better for the bags to those suppliers to be paid for by the Society. This issue therefore needs to go back to the Committee.

4 Leaflets (Committee minutes item 7, page 7)

After a discussion about the Committee's decision to combine four leaflets into one, it was agreed unanimously that a leaflet specifically for Fleece is needed. Wool is the main selling point for Shetland sheep at these Wool events and is the source of most questions on the stands. A case can be presented to the Committee about why, and the dissemination of the initial small print run could be monitored via stock control at each stall. The design for a new fleece leaflet is work in progress, but it was agreed that there is a need to maintain a corporate design across all Society leaflets, and new images for the fleece leaflet.

5 Website

It was agreed that all of our Group members should take a look at and comment on the interim wool pages on the Society website. A plan is needed for the wool pages, and Cluny offered to take a landscape photo of coloured fleece. Hazel offered to review other wool sites to form a framework for the Shetland sites. Comments on the content and format would be welcome. All news and events should be posted on the website.

6 Reports on our remit

1 Wool Quality

Wool quality is driven by the show ring but manufacturers and craft need fleeces that can be processed; there can be a disparity between the desired qualities. The breed standard is laid down in our Constitution, so liaison is needed between members, judges and inspectors to ensure everyone is working to those standards. Micron testing would be a useful aid.

2 Wool events

It would be good to promote more small events and local shows. Another two stands are needed to cover the country and Lynn is looking into this for Committee. She is also costing Gazebos, one for each of what will be six stands.

3 Education and training

There is a general need for educating people on the desirable qualities of fleece for wool, craft and the health of our sheep.

4 Micron testing, etc., including Premium Ram Scheme (Committee minutes P.6)

The University of York has offered micron testing to Cluny. This was greeted with enthusiasm. Cluny will find out more information from the university, and the Committee should be informed once more details are known.

5 Archive to be discussed by Committee October 2015

There was a discussion about Sue Russo's legacy of knitted items and it was hoped that this is to be included at the next Committee Meeting. The aim is for it to be photographed and catalogued and to be used, perhaps by batches being sent to breed stands for a year at a time. This led to a discussion about insurance and then photographs and copyright. This subject was quite complicated, therefore we have decided to seek more advice.

6 Liaison with Shetland and America

It was agreed that if the Fine Fleece Shetland Sheep Association wanted to use our Society Judges these should be organised through our Show Secretary and that the position should be formalised.

7 Any Other Business

The need for a survey on Wool and Craft issues (Committee minutes 32, Page 3)

It was agreed that all should see the responses to a previous Membership survey carried out in 2012 with a view to deciding if a survey on just wool and craft would be helpful. The 2012 responses are in an email form and can be forwarded. We would then have a better understanding of what is required and how to deal with the subject.

Expenses (Committee minutes, Page 5)

Members of the Wool Group can claim up to £70, for attending a meeting, at their discretion. There is probably only the need to have one face-to-face meeting a year; email and internet can be used in the interim, and software will eventually be made available to subcommittees to hold virtual meetings. It was proposed that the next face-to-face should be held at the National Show and Sale at Melton Mowbray in 2016.

Minutes (Committee minutes, Page 8, 82 and also 76)

Minutes have to be agreed and submitted within 28 days of a meeting.

Budget for the current year (Committee minutes Page 10.95)

The current budget is £150/show. Committee has asked how many wool events there will be a year but it was agreed that it was difficult to say at the outset how many because there are always alterations. It was agreed that it makes more sense to provide a breakdown and review at the end of the year. All events have to go before Committee to be approved but after that it creates a logistical issue if the forms have to go via the Secretary, then to the Wool Group Chairman, Treasurer, and local organiser. Once Committee has approved a show, maybe Wool events may be dealt with by the Wool Group.

AOB Arising

It was agreed that if the Group is approached by interested new members, they should in the first instance be referred to the Protocols and Guidance notes and encouraged to join in and help and then organise an event. We will be looking for replacement Group members.

Sadly, for personal reasons, Simonie has to take a step back from the work of the Group although she will remain a member. There is therefore a need for more help in Wales, the Marches and bordering areas.

Simonie thanked Mary for all her hard work. Lynn was thanked for her presentation of the Group on Committee.