

MAINE EQUINE WELFARE ALLIANCE- September 2010 Minutes

September 15, 2010

Time – 6:30pm

Location – Maine Farm Bureau Office, Augusta

Mission Statement: *"The Maine Equine Welfare Alliance is a grassroots affiliation of horse owners, the equine industry and horse lovers committed to enriching and enhancing the lives of Maine's equines through direct assistance, foster care, emergency intervention and public education."*

20 attending and 2 on phone

- 1) Welcome – Chair Person Michelle Melaragno. We also watched a brief, humorous video on "the life of an equine vet" from Xtranormal.com.
- 2) Volunteer to take September Meeting Minutes – Katie Lisnik
- 3) Introductions by those in attendance and our conference call member
- 4) Acceptance of August Meeting Minutes: Moved, seconded and passed to accept minutes.
- 5) Membership and finances - No concrete membership numbers yet, but we have already collected over \$1000.00 into our account through membership dues and donations. Chair Melaragno reminded attendees to get their dues in to the Maine Farm Bureau.
- 6) Chair Melaragno announced that our Guest Speaker was unable to make the meeting but that he will be working on a Lakes Region Public Access TV show- one half hour to focus on MEWA and another half hour to focus on basic horse care. The filming crew is looking for horse barns/owners to visit- if you are willing, let Michelle Melaragno know.
- 7) Jon Olson spoke about current Maine tax exemptions for farmers- hay, feed, litter, medicine etc used in agricultural operations, including equines, is tax-free according to Maine Statutes Title 36. He also told the group about the Maine Farm Bureau's Disaster Relief Fund, which is a non-profit organization. They collect donated funds and will grant money out to farmers in need after disaster strikes. There is a \$500.00 limit to the grants, but farms do not need to be MFB members to apply and receive.
- 8) Discussion of Bylaws – The Structure Sub-Committee has not yet had a chance to meet. They will do so prior to the October meeting and will report back on their efforts.
- 9) PetSmart Charities contacted Chair Melaragno and offered MEWA that opportunity to apply for a pilot grant to help fund assistance for struggling equine owners. She will apply and keep us advised on any progress.
- 10) Current donations and assistance requests- Currently we have received two inquiries on euthanasia request. One owner has not followed up with Dr. Janelle Tirrell. The second one led us into a discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the Vet and Farrier Assistance Committee as outlined below.
- 11) Committee Reports-
 - a) **Veterinary & Farrier Assistance:** Chair: Janelle Tirrell
A Committee meeting was held after the general meeting on September 15th. A lengthy discussion was held during the general meeting as well: A protocol was discussed for owners requesting emergency euthanasia. Discussion centered around MEWA being able to assist vets in their work for people who need help, as opposed to providing money to people or requesting that vets offer discounted services. We do not want to be stepping on vet's toes, giving some preferential treatment etc...We also discussed a general request application for people looking for any kind of assistance. There is basic info that we

need to gather on each potential assistance case. We also need to ensure accountability of the owner- that the assistance is truly needed and we're not propping up an owner who really should not have the horses. Much discussion also centered on low-cost vaccine clinics- who would they be open to? Would it be offered in a specific location that people travelled to or would it be subsidized with the vets in their travels to farms across the state? Would applications be required for this service? Would a voucher system like Help Fix ME work? We also recognized the importance of having a meeting to introduce MEWA to equine vets around the state (Equine Practitioners of Maine). Finally, the point was made that there are many horses out there with varying levels of need. We are a small organization and should prioritize which cases get help first. Emergency needs, hay needs etc...might be a higher priority than providing vaccines. However- this reactive response needs to be balanced with proactive activities that help out at the ground level before cases become emergencies.

b) **Temporary Foster and Rescue Homes:** Chair: Jan & Jim Marconi

This Committee has been working via email and independently to identify current rescues and shelters in Maine along with contact information. They are also contacting groups for sample applications, foster forms, etc...

c) **Hay and Feed Assistance:** Chair: Deb Plengey

This Committee met prior to the general meeting and elected an official Chair. They discussed taking a look at existing hay banks in the state, along with guidelines, applications, protocols etc from other states/organizations. One priority issue they identified will be staging storage locations around the state as well as hands to assist with moving, transport etc...Other issues discussed included rotating stock so that it does not go bad, a "hold harmless" statement recipients sign and outreach to grain distributors for thoughts on a voucher system, donations etc...They will meet again prior to the general Meeting in October.

d) **Resources:** Chair: Donna Hughes

Committee has had 1 in-person meeting. Discussion is still being had on the goals of this Committee. Current focus is on identifying general resource guides already in publication so we do not reinvent the wheel- i.e. Maine Stable Guide, The Horse's Maine, MFB yearly Equine Guide etc...We also will be ensuring that MEWA gets into these resources so that people begin to find out about us. The Committee will be scheduling another meeting.

e) **Public Awareness & Education:** Chair: Melanie Langmeyer

Melanie was on conference call, but due to interference, dropped off prior to the Committee reports. Donna Coffin filled in and went over the work that has been done on the brochure. Comments, suggestions and edits were made, which Donna will incorporate. We now have a yahoo account, which will likely change once a domain name and website has been set up, with the ability to have our own personalized email system. There is a Facebook group already up and running. During the Committee meeting they also discussed outreach to feed stores to distribute the brochure, printing costs, printing numbers, and more. Janelle Tirrell volunteered to look into printing costs. We also need to decide who checks the general MEWA emails and funnels them to the appropriate Committee.

f) **Political Action/Legal:** Chair: Missy Libby

No updates from Committee- next meeting will be prior to the general October meeting.

- 12) Fundraising came up and the group decided that such an important function needs its own Group and should not be added on to any current Committee's work load. It was motioned, seconded and passed unanimously to form a Fundraising Subcommittee of the Board of Directors. Membership includes all members of the Board, plus anyone else who wants to join. The Chair of the subcommittee should be one of the At-Large Board Members or another person, not one of the current Committee Chairs. His subcommittee will have its first meeting on Tuesday, September 28th at 6pm at Deb Plengey and Trudie Lee's home.
- 13) Election of At large Board Members were voted on. The following three individuals were voted unanimously onto the Board of Directors as At-Large Members.
 - i) Peter Wappler
 - ii) Maddy Gray
 - iii) Katie Lisnik
- 14) Website & database development – Estelle Werly and Donna Coffin will work together to identify some potential scenarios for our website

- 15) A discussion of meeting momentum was held. We have a great regular turnout at our monthly meetings and the Committees have not yet begun meeting on a regular schedule. We decided to keep on with the regular monthly meetings for a couple more months until the Committees establish a basic regular meeting schedule to engage members and focus our work. The Committees need to be actively recruiting members and generating work based on their assigned roles.
- 16) Schedule next meetings- Wednesday, October 20th 6:30pm at the Farm Bureau Office and Wednesday, November 17th at 6:30pm at the Farm Bureau Office.
- 17) Adjourned at 8:35pm

Minutes Respectfully Submitted

Katie Lisnik

9/24/2010