

ARBA Board Meeting: May 19, 2021

The meeting of the board of the American Romney Breeders Association was called to order by President, Don Burgess, at 7:35 p.m. on May 19, 2021. Participating in the Zoom meeting were Burgess, Anne McIntyre-Lahner, Charlene Carlisle, Rick Trojanoski, Melissa Wubben, Emma Morton Rogers, Patricia Sanville, Penny Swearingen, Zane Van Horsen, Carol Pasheilich, Ken Gossard, ARBA secretary JoAnn Mast and Chris Posbergh, past president.

Don opened the meeting with an explanation of the purpose, to discuss the committee report regarding the registration of semen imported from New Zealand by Iron Water Ranch. The committee of Emma Rogers, Patty Sanville, Penny Swearingen and Rick Trojanoski was given the task of determining the impact of registration of three rams, Rosebank 3/03, Rosebank 59/03 and Rosebank 86/03. In addition, the committee was to determine whether or not one ram had two registrations. Documentation was reviewed by the committee, through ARBA records, email messages, Associated Registries and the Black and Coloured Sheep Breeders Association of New Zealand (BCSBANZ). If registered, all three rams would be recorded with BCSBANZ. The NZ Romney Association only records white Romneys.

The committee searched the records of three Rosebank Farm rams, and determined that one ram 3/03 was recorded and approved by the New Zealand registry and was registered with ARBA during the amnesty program offered in 2015-16. Rams 59/03 and 86/03 were not entered in the New Zealand registry and were not listed as purebred Romneys. These two rams were not accepted for registry by ARBA, based on the lack of purebred status in New Zealand. The recommendation of the committee was to accept the progeny of ram 3/03 and to eliminate the registrations of all progeny from rams 59/03 and 86/03. A question was raised regarding whether or not percentage or appendix registrations might be considered for these bloodlines. The committee is not recommending that this form of registration be implemented.

Refer to the committee report provided prior to this meeting for details.

Emma also provided an overview of the contacts made with Kirsten Holbo, BCSBANZ, ARBA AI/ET policies and procedures in the by laws in making their recommendations.

Don thanked Emma and the committee for their work and invited meeting participants to offer insight, questions, comments and concerns. Keep this informal and share as much as possible to help make a proper decision.

Melissa inquired about any restrictions of participation by the three board members involved in the committee's work (Iron Water Ranch, Tawanda Farms and Oak Creek Farm). Charlene stated she encourages participation and representation by all. Ken and Anne agreed. Don reminded the board of the purpose of the committee work, and that the role of ARBA should be the focus of the discussion. He asked for a reply to the request, (discussion open to all) and received no objections.

Ken asked "Why were there no concerns of pedigrees on three animals sold at the 2019 National Romney Sale?" All three were progeny of the imported semen. ARBA is tasked with oversight of the sale entries. There may be more than three farms impacted by the board decision.

Anne questioned what ARBA can do to compensate buyers of the National Sale animals, at other sales and private treaty sales. How can the owners be compensated for any adjustments to pedigrees and future breedings?

Ken asked about the recording of the rams in New Zealand, and it was explained that 3/03 was recorded and dam and sire were recorded. Rams 59/03 and 86/03 were not recorded, from non-registered flock and were not inspected for registry.

Following a question from Anne, Don invited Chris Posbergh, member of the Science Committee that reviewed whether or not Moorit coloring could be found in Romney sheep. Question to Chris – can a test be used to determine whether an animal is a purebred Romney? A test is available, it provides evidence within plus or minus 5% validity. The testing can be done in the U.S. and it is based on New Zealand standards. Purebred Romneys in New Zealand are approved at a score of 90% and higher. Don indicated that any information provided by Chris would have a disclaimer, needing input and review by a Science Committee secured by ARBA.

Gene Seek Testing in Lincoln, Nebraska can do the DNA testing. It is a test that requires time and consideration of how to proceed. Tests are \$30 per animal (research rate) and require several weeks to complete.

Patty offered her sheep as an example, indicating they are not purebred Romneys but that they would probably score as such with the % of error being discussed. Chris indicated that testing could lead to other issues, purebreds not testing within the % and non registered animals proving to be Romneys.

Chris also provided that some ARBA registration certificates are missing for 2006-2009, leaving gaps in some current pedigrees.

Don added a word of advice, that testing always comes with benefits and cautions. Testing is available for anyone wanting to have it done, not just researchers. The Ovine 50K Genotype Test can be used, costs could include the testing and potential of veterinary expenses to collect sample tissues.

Anne asked about the recommendation of the current ad hoc committee and genetic testing. The committee did not support testing. If an ad hoc committee is tasked with additional work, should membership on the committee be reviewed? Some members are directly connected to the issue being discussed.

Don indicated that if ARBA moved to genetic testing for breed purity, the board would need to approve.

Emma replied the current committee discussed genetic testing and how it would be addressed, received by breeders and buyers and the monitoring needed to confirm testing. Patty added that test results would allow purebred status for non purebred animals, due to the 5% error.

Melissa asked how checks are done on the registration applications. Discussion led to the role of Associated Registries and the communication with them regarding updates and changes to the registration process through ARBA. Emma added that during the amnesty period, the three rams were presented, one approved. No documented report was provided Associated Registries to discontinue rams 59/03 and 86/03 as sires of purebred Romneys. Anne indicated that this oversight was noticed when documents were shared by the current AI/ET Committee of ARBA.

Don was not sure of the discovery, but asked how can we move forward accurately and fix the issues that are currently taking place? Melissa asked the same, how can we intervene to prevent this in the future? Emma focused on the approval of ram 3/03, a registered ARBA ram. Her view is that the owner knew the other two rams would not receive ARBA registrations, but continued to breed and sell the progeny.

Melissa inquired about flock testing. Ken indicated that DNA testing is done on a random basis in the dairy industry and could be done with sheep as well, testing registration of animals that were entered as number 100, 200, 300 of each year. Question of who pays for testing – reply was ARBA if okay, breeder if not a purebred Romney.

Ken suggested that since the two rams in question had already appeared on multi-generation pedigrees that they be accepted in the registry. Further discussion included that pedigrees can be generated for any animal, genetic testing would have an element of error, testing does have limitations, recessive animals will be produced from purebreds (natural color and moorit) and why not have appendix registrations.

Rick responded with a need to follow policy and procedures, not allow non-registered rams to be entered in the pedigrees. Accepting the two rams would only encourage non purebred sheep in the registry.

Emma reminded the board they are wanting to change policy, the committee recommended supporting the ARBA policy.

Anne focused concerns on buyers who have purchased animals assuming they are registered and purebred. What responsibility does ARBA have in making things right? 2019 National Sale pay off, cost of testing, loss of breeding program, paying registrations with NCWGA, contacting owners of Moorit registered animals.

Patty reinforced the difficulty of the committee in making recommendations. Where does personal responsibility begin/end and ARBA responsibility begin/end? Not easy considerations for breeders, the board, or the committee.

Don summarized the discussions with a reminder that the Ad Hoc Science Committee and the current committee both identified rams 59/03 and 86/03 as not meeting the criteria of registry in New Zealand or with ARBA. The question is still: How do we proceed and how will we determine the best method of resolving the registrations associated with these two rams?

More discussion relating to genetic testing, lack of ethics by breeders, using the New Zealand levels for purebreds, communications with Associated Registries, ARBA by laws on testing for cross breeding and actions relating to breeders using falsified (bastard) pedigrees.

Don inquired if enough information had been presented to make a decision on how to move forward.

Patty reminded all that the committee had made a recommendation regarding how to move forward and suggestions for preventing this from occurring in the future.

Don added that all breeds originated from similar wild breeds, and some recessive genetics are going to appear during testing. Chris indicated that the flock he is working had 2 colored lambs from a white flock

of 400 ewes. Melissa also indicated 97% is an acceptable level of purity and 100% is seldom recorded. Carol stated that random genetic testing by ARBA would require that a certain % level be approved and accepted as purebred. Don indicated the board needs to be diligent and remember this is a new precedence.

Ken asked about having purebred and appendix registrations as is done in other associations. This could be an incentive for registrations to be processed and assist in slowing the loss of Romney registrations. Committee members Patty and Emma reminded Ken and the board that this change would amend ARBA policy and be activated due to the misdeed of a breeder or breeders, not an action of the board to initiate new options for registering Romneys.

Anne stated she is most concerned about members who have purchased animals assuming they are purebred, registered animals. What responsibility does ARBA have to make things right for those individuals? Patty asked at what level does ARBA responsibility end? Providing testing, supporting transfer to NCWGA, or something else.

Carol said it was one individual presenting applications and that the actions of the AI/ET committee and Associated Registries aided and abetted the introduction of pedigrees in the ARBA registry. Don and Emma replied that the committee did act according to policy in accepting ram 3/03 and not approving rams 59/03 and 86/03.

Penny provided additional support for the decision of the current ad hoc committee, including % and appendix registrations, genetics of the 3 rams, options for progeny, and expenses for correcting the registrations. She also expresses concerns about entries in the Great Lakes Sale in Wooster, Ohio to be held Memorial weekend.

Don reminded the board the role of the ad hoc committee was to review current policies, and past actions of the AI/ET committee were not part of their task, even though the acceptance of one ram and rejection of two rams followed ARBA rules. He asked, do we take any action, do we explore genetic testing, how do we proceed and determine where to go? We need to understand how we reached this point and how to solve issues of registrations.

Anne indicated if we consider genetic testing we may discover registered animals that are not within the % acceptable for purebred status. Or that animals denied registration test within the parameters of purebred. ARBA record books are already impacted. Individuals skirting the rules should be held accountable. Why penalize those who have been impacted by purchases? If New Zealand would not record animals, why should ARBA?

Additional comments focused on AI/ET committee work, communication with associated registries and the recommendations of the current ad hoc committee.

Don asked if enough information had been presented to reach a recommendation. Patty indicated the committee had made a recommendation that needs to be accepted or rejected. Don asked if there is a motion.

Zane expressed concerns regarding impact on breeding programs, impact on the board and her intent to focus on improving the Romney breed and not intentionally misrepresenting their genetics.

Ken moved to look into genetic testing relating to purity of Romney rams based on New Zealand testing protocol. Seconded by Anne. Rick offered an amendment to have a third party of peers review the testing process. Second??? Anne asked about who peers would be. Response was veterinarians and breeders, not board members. Are we testing the two rams not approved for registration, or looking to establish a testing process? Why do we need a third party review committee? Third party review would take pressure off current board. A third party would only review data and regulations, not impacted by pedigrees. Rick stated that the current ad hoc committee has made a decision, sent a recommendation and any further work by them would be influenced by their decisions.

Discussion continued with points regarding how to move forward, whether number of members impacted makes a difference in decision, how ARBA's future will be affected, how will financial liabilities be covered and how to follow current policies in place.

Don called for a vote on the amendment for third party review of testing, motion passed. A roll call vote on the amended motion was done, with Melissa, Carol, Ken and Zane not voting. Motion to research genetic testing failed 5-1.

Rick moved to accept the decision and recommendations, in entirety, presented by the ad hoc committee. Charlene seconded. Emma shared and read the document prepared by the ad hoc committee. Refer to document provided prior to the meeting.

Patty asked who would be voting, entire board or board members not impacted by outcome. Chris Posbergh strongly encouraged input from other members and breeders, indicated this was not a good situation for ARBA and his future with the association could be reduced. Anne does not support the entire decision of the ad hoc committee and hates being in the position of identifying to move on these findings. Patty questions the comments from Chris, indicating the committee put a great deal of time and energy into making a decision by following the facts, and waiting for more input may not change the results of their work. Chris stated that pulling registrations without owner awareness will have impacts. Don summarized the comments, stressing there are still unknown factors that influence how people will vote. Emma asked if there was more for the committee to research. Melissa asked how members would be notified if registrations are cancelled. Patty questioned where a new document might surface, since 5 years of waiting has produced none. Carol reminded others that genetic testing would provide more clarity on status of purebred and should be considered. Penny raised several issues, which the ad hoc committee discussed, (how to prove purebred, what % is ARBA willing to accept, who and how will fees be paid, how will by laws be changed, how many breeders will accept and make changes and how many will walk away).

Don called for a roll call vote of the motion to accept the work of the ad hoc committee. Vote was conducted without impacted board members and passed with a 5-1 vote.

Ken described his situation and the loss of two years in a breeding program, making his flock a commercial flock. He questioned his role on the board and will evaluate his future involvement. Carol stated she agrees with Ken and Chris on input and the vote of six board members making a decision. She reminded the board that a one time exception was done for payments after the 2019 National Sale, why not a one time solution for this. Anne asked if the vote of 6 was adequate based on by laws, Chris confirmed it was and that a majority vote of the 6 was according to by laws as well.

Next discussions referred to what and when happens next. Best method of moving forward, who contacts members, who pays and for what, why would affected board members support any decisions, will ARBA purchase or provide subsidy for sheep unregistered, why did ARBA allow any of these registrations to be processed, can owners do testing and prove purebred status – all questions for consideration.

Following discussion Ken and Zane expressed a need to resign from the board and Chris indicated it would be difficult for him to assume the secretary/treasurer position for ARBA.

Don called for a motion to adjourn at 10:12 p.m. EDT. Motion by Emma, second by Rick, motion passed.

Submitted by

JoAnn Mast, ARBA Secretary