

In My **Opinion**

Alpaca Breed Standard...Just Say No!

by Heinz Wilms

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First off...I must comment on the apparently unstoppable inertia for a "breed standard" that began with the AOBA Board several years ago with no real vote of the membership that such a project was needed, desired or required haste. I still have not seen evidence for such a standard after having attended two Type Conferences (Northeast and Mid Atlantic). The Northeast meeting was a rigged format from the get go...the assumption was made that the membership would want a standard if it were worded correctly and had the membership participation. The Mid Atlantic meeting was clearly opposed to a breed standard...and yet we, the AOBA Members, were never given a synopsis of the results of the Type Conferences. If I understand it, the proposed breed standard came from an unidentified source, with no provenance attached.

What should come first is a vote of all members of AOBA .. not just the members attending a meeting in Nevada...that steps should go forward in the development of a standard...yes..or no...before expending any more emotional and intellectual capital on this. Instead, it seems to be driven by a few powerful, large breeders who wish to impose their desires on the membership via the back door through a very subtle, but disingenuous process..namely, "If there would be a Standard...what should it be?" That sets up a momentum that can and is being

manipulated by pro standard members without their fingerprints on it.

I maintain that our gene pool is still way too small to risk concentration through a standard...and ask the question...What is the big rush? Does someone have a bunch of animals they want to move or foist on the rest of us? Is this step one in a move to "certified" herd sires?...then to artificial insemination and embryo transfer? It's a slippery slope indeed...that seems more driven by greed than by need. (Say... that's kind of catchy, isn't it?)



Let's just have a straight out vote of the membership...yes or no...on the development of a breed standard...before anything more is done.

Equally important is the question of how the "Standard" will be administered if one is actually adopted. (Perhaps even more important.) This is because a Standard initially benign can be manipulated too easily by Board or other influence if the proper autonomy, transparency

and freedom from conflicts of interest are not imbedded in amendment procedures. The Proposed Governance and Revision Process for AOBA Alpaca Breed Standard is very deficient in several ways.

First and foremost should be procedures that make it very difficult to change a standard. The notion of annual reworks for the first three years is troubling. This power, as proposed, rests with the Alpaca Breed Standard Council. And the Council does not enjoy immunity from interference by the AOBA Board. (Good example...a few years ago, the Show Committee was disbanded by the Board when it refused to adopt items wanted by the Board...and a new Show Committee was formed which subsequently ratified the changes desired by the Board.) Such manipulation is what is greatly feared by many AOBA members who have been around long enough to see similar circumstances.

Similarly, it should be all the AOBA members, not just the BSC, that determine the frequency of standard changes...yea...even the very existence or need for a breed standard.

Specific Comments:

1. Purpose: To whom will the BSC channel opinions & suggestions on recommended changes? To the AOBA Board??? Directly to the membership of AOBA without Board interference? I suggest to the membership...not through the AOBA Board.

Only AOBA members (not other interested parties) shall be eligible to suggest changes. All suggestions for change shall identify who is making the suggestion. Anonymous suggestions shall not be considered. In other words, the process should be completely transparent to the membership.

2. Who: Will the BSC members be limited to one term? This needs to be specified...and I suggest no more than two terms of three years each.

3. BSC Members shall have no affiliation with any AOBA board members...business or familial. We don't want members who are beholden in some way to the Board or even the appearance of a conflict of interest, so that there is no influence from the Board.

Likewise, the officers of the BSC shall be limited to no more than two terms of one year each of all officerships. (In other words...one could not serve as administrator for two years and then switch to Secretary or Treasurer.)

4. Who will appoint the BSC members? I suggest not the AOBA Board. Have each AOBA affiliate appoint two members. If the decision is have each affiliate appoint one member...then no affiliate should have more than one member on the BSC. If more members are needed, then no affiliate should have more than two members on the BSC.

5. Funding: Assessing the BSC members \$50 seems reasonable...but there should be an upper limit to prevent pricing small breeders out of participation. While the AOBA Board does need to approve a budget for the BSC, there should be some mechanism to prevent the AOBA Board from rendering the BSC impotent if the AOBA Board withdraws funding from the BSC.

6. Meetings: Complete minutes of all meetings shall be kept and made available to the entire AOBA Membership within two weeks of any meeting. Postings on the Internet Web Site would suffice. There

is nothing in the current proposed procedures regarding the recording of meetings...and this needs to be corrected ... No confidential executive sessions should be allowed. Likewise all communications between the "administrator" as liaison with the AOBA Board shall be posted promptly on the web site...Transparency is key here. (No back-room negotiations.)

7. Procedure for Initiating Modification/Amendment Process: All proposals to amend or modify shall be acknowledged by BSC to the proposer and given a tracking number in a sequential order by date of receipt to assure that no proposal is inadvertently "misplaced."

A minimum fee of \$10 is reasonable...an upper limit of \$25 shall be adopted to allow small breeders affordability.

Identifying the author is very good...in fact, imperative! The author shall also be required to present a rationale for such proposal.

The BSC summary shall include both pro and con rationales for the proposed change and shall identify the author of the proposal in its presentation to the AOBA membership.

An index of all proposals submitted to the BSC for consideration shall be made at least annually, be posted on the AOBA web site and other appropriate venues and the index shall include the author/proposer, the date submitted, the assigned identification number, status of the proposal (pending review, under review, rejected or submitted to the membership for consideration).

AOBA members shall be afforded the opportunity to review the index and summaries of all proposals under consideration within 30 days of a written request from the AOBA member. (sort of a "Freedom of Information" request)

8. Procedure for Amending the US Alpaca Breed Standard: First of all...where is the procedure for initially adopting a Breed Standard? The November 27 (dated but not received until

mid December) letter talks about the Reno Type Conference as a culmination of the various type conferences held around the country in 2005/2006. Only about 100 people, mostly representing Western US members, attended this Type Conference and I am informed that it was not a synthesis, but basically ignored the previous Type Conferences as too confusing and another "draft" proposed breed standard suddenly appeared, authors anonymous, with the instruction that the Ad hoc Peer Review Committee was there only to collate all suggestions and to revise both draft documents according to the input.

Please collate this comment: Reject the notion of a Breed Standard. Stop work on it and wait for 10 more years before bringing up the subject again.

Also, the quorum of 35% is too low. At least 60% (or better 67%) of the membership eligible to vote should be the minimum. As proposed in the draft, just 24% of the eligible membership could enact a change (35% x 2/3). A change must be difficult to achieve and have broad support. (24% isn't)

When proposals are submitted to the membership for a vote, the author of the proposed amendment must be identified, the BSC recommended action, and all pros and cons must be included in the proposed change as provided to the AOBA membership.

I have a number of comments I could make about the draft breed standard...but I reject the notion or need for one and do not want a set of my comments to be erroneously misconstrued as support for even the concept of a breed standard.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact me.

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