

Summary of minutes of annual meeting: Monday August 2: Richard Ehrhardt chaired the meeting, Tom Murphy was co-chair and Joan Burke secretary.

Richard opened the meeting by going over the meeting agenda and objectives, describing the structure of the meeting which is to be flexible. Introductions were made. Station Reports for each objective were made by participants.

Ernie Minton, administrative advisor and Dean of College of Agriculture, Kansas State University, joined the meeting and introduced himself. Ernie discussed the new project which began October 1, 2020 and explained the similarities and differences between the current project and the former project (NCERA 214) that this group had pursued. He described that an expectation is for integrated collaboration among members. Ernie recognized that most members are faculty members representing sheep and/or small ruminants at their home institution often as sole faculty in this discipline and that participation in this group could offer collegial interaction that they may not have otherwise. He explained further that this project should seek to demonstrate multi-state collaboration and that this should be emphasized and/or highlighted in the annual and mid-term reports, and renewal if the group so decides.

Christina Hamilton introduced herself. She shared a helpful site to help with reports, etc.: <https://www.ncra-saes.org/multistate-handbook>. She explained that this project will have shorter reports (3-5 pp.) of multi-state collaborative efforts and not full station reports with an emphasis on what the group is doing together.

Questions for advisors. Richard asked about revising current objectives to be more specific. Ernie and Chris replied that since the project is approved, the project cannot be changed. Because each objective is quite broad a lot of people could fit within the objective. Chris included that there is much opportunity for flexibility and to communicate any issues or deviations from the project to her.

Ernie suggested to ask Experiment Station Directors of member locations if there are funds available for the project. Answers will vary by location. Richard asked how new people can enroll in the project. Chris answered that the Experiment Station Director needs to give permission, and for locations without ESD, just contact her. She suggested to contact her if members take more than five minutes on the NIMMS website finding something and she can easily answer questions. Ernie emphasized that our group has already been acting as an ERA, so this new project is not much different. Ernie explained that if this project proves not to be a good fit as an NC, we can always go back to an ERA.

Participants described their sheep resources, including research, teaching and extension, through slides and discussion: (URI, K. Petersson; MSU, R. Ehrhardt; USDA ARS DBSFRC, J. Burke; UK, D. Aaron, D. Ely; UC-Davis, R. Busch; UI, B. Murdoch; USDA ARS MARC, T. Murphy; MSU, C. Posbergh; UN-Reno, A. Hess; NCSU, A. Weaver; VSU, S. Wildeus)

Business Meeting. Since the last meeting was unofficial and occurred in between NCERA-214 and NC-214, there was no formal approval of the minutes. Discussed “champions” or leaders of each objective who can lead meetings per objective after the annual meeting to ensure full collaboration among members for each objective. Leaders are Richard (Obj 1), Whit (Obj. 2), Tom (Obj. 3), and Joan (Obj. 4). New members should review the description of the objectives on the NIMMS site to decide which to sign up for. It should be noted that all the objectives are research objectives, but include an extension component within each, at least informally. Any extension activities can be reported as

impact/outcomes. An email call will go out to all members and prospective members for each objectives meeting, but just attend those of interest. The structure and function within each objective will be discussed. Yearly report due within 60 days of meeting. Evidence of collaborations will need to be included in the next report.

Recruitment of new members. Members are encouraged to reach out to members and perspective members (those involved in last project) to be involved with the Objectives meetings and future meetings.

Invitation to industry groups to attend annual meeting. Meetings have historically included representatives from ASI and NSIP, and sometimes ALB. Members agreed that we do not wish to be exclusive and the discussion focused on other industry groups to invite, including Sheep Genetics USA, Superior, and feedlot groups. The pros and cons of inviting these groups were discussed. Pros were that industry groups could gain an understanding of what our group does and provide input to research objectives. Cons were that industry groups might use information or data from unpublished research reports. The Proceedings is not for publication as Deb Aaron pointed out. Rusty Burgett was happy to be included in the meeting as several members have been involved in upcoming changes to NSIP. Susan Shultz suggested that members reach out and become involved in Sheep Genetics USA, but otherwise that industry group may not otherwise benefit from attendance at NC-214. Richard made a motion to invite ALB, ASI and NSIP to the next meeting which was seconded by Tom. (There was also discussion to include Jim Miller in future meetings since he acts as a valuable consultant and is a former member/retired from LSU).

Memorial for Mike Thonney who passed away unexpectedly earlier this year. Pictures and memories were shared. Mike will be missed.

Nominations committee (Tom and Stephan). Tom nominated Chris Posbergh as Secretary for the 2021-2022 year. Joan Burke will move to Vice-Chair and Tom Murphy to Chair. Katherine seconded the motion.

Resolutions Committee (Joan and Chris P.). Resolutions were developed to gain support of the U.S. sheep industry by Land Grant Universities and USDA, ARS, acknowledge Richard in hosting the virtual meeting, and to thank participants from stakeholder groups (ASI, NSIP).

Future meeting time and location, 2022 decided upon: USDA ARS MARC, Clay Center hosted by Tom Murphy with possible one day at University of Nebraska-Lincoln to be hosted by Ron Lewis. Meeting to occur June 6-7.