

AHA Convention report by Julie Koch

Julie Koch and Jim Carr represented AHAN at the AHA Convention Nov. 16-18 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Approximately 270 of 487 eligible delegates attended the annual convention. AHA president Lance Walters opened the convention with a state of the association address. He talked about how the last three years have been difficult financially, and the struggling economy hasn't helped. Memberships, sweepstakes participation and horse registrations all continue to decline. They are all important for AHA's financial health. This year, AHA's operating budget has a \$300,000 profit. He said AHA is putting money into all accounts for the first time in five years. AHA is also paying off the sweepstakes note and it will be paid off by September of 2012. This has occurred because AHA has adopted a fiscally responsible attitude in the office and on the board.

Walters said AHA's profit centers of membership and registrations continue to decline, but the percentage of decline has slowed in the last two years. We need to show the benefits of AHA membership and of registering Arabians. To help with that, the AHA board of directors has earmarked \$15,000 in promotional funds for farms, clubs, etc., to introduce outsiders to Arabians. In addition, the board earmarked \$25,000 in fiscal 2013 to help improve youth participation.

Modern Arabian Horse continues to be one of the top equine magazines and is moving up as an income producer. This year, it accounted for \$500,000 in revenue, guaranteeing a six-figure profit.

As for the national shows: Youth Nationals were healthy but had lower participation (budgeted for 940 horses, had 888). Sport Horse Nationals was very successful, with more exhibitors and more horses (536) than budgeted (500). And now with the rotation between Virginia and Idaho, it should continue to grow.

Canadian Nationals exceeded projected income by 250 percent. Exhibitors and attendees raved about the new site in Brandon, Manitoba. The show made \$77,000, budgeting for 740 horses and getting 657. And next year, there will be yearling halter classes, with Rae Dawn Arabians giving \$15,000 per year for five years to the two purebred yearling classes and \$5,000 for the Half-Arabian classes.

At the U.S. Nationals, the halter division was expanded and the numbers were up significantly (493 classes entries, compared with 300 in 2010). The commercial exhibit space sold out. There were 1,805 horses entered, 85 more than budgeted. The Tulsa convention and visitors bureau and the mayor have pledged to increase subsidies to AHA to \$500,000 per year if we sign a contract to hold the show there through 2017. However, Walters emphasized that no contract has been signed and AHA is accepting bids from sites for the USN for 2013-17.

Walters commended Judges and Stewards Commissioner Stan Morey for his presence and availability at nationals and regionals. The education process for judges is improving and Morey's staff brings functionality and integrity to the judges and stewards program.

As for sweepstakes, Walters said there were 95 new nominated sires this year and when the deadline for breeding entries was extended, an additional 177 foals were entered.

Georgia Tachaires reported for the membership committee and announced the revocation of club charters for five clubs whose membership had dropped below 10 members. The list originally included 17 clubs.

Dave Corning gave the treasurer's report. AHA's actual profit was \$241,417. The board of directors decided not to repair the roof of the building in Denver since it is not leaking. AHA may consider selling that building and moving to one that has less space, since we don't need all of it now. On paper, AHA is currently \$1.7 million in debt, but almost all of that is owed to itself. Corning said we are improving, but not totally out of the woods. But it looks positive.

Other tidbits from general session: Executive vice president Glenn Petty spoke about how clubs need to work to keep and gain members. There are 249 clubs in AHA. We need to emphasize local participation. We need to work with 4-H and FFA to attract youth; need to find ways to expose Arabians to owners of other breeds; and AHA needs to be both a breed and show organization. We need to convince those disciplines other than showing that there is value in being an AHA member.

Petty provided registration and membership figures:

Membership	2008	2009	2010	2011
Adult	36,238	32,204	29,644	27,626
Youth	4,050	3,528	3,102	2,801

Registrations	2008	2009	2010	2011
Purebred	4,953	4,395	3,818	3,010
Half-Arabian	2,095	1,531	1,403	931

Petty said there were 328 AHA sanctioned shows this year, 193 distance rides and 26 one-day shows.

The Region 6 volunteers of the year were Steve Hugus of the Wyoming AHA and myself.

I also attended some committee meetings.

Youth Nationals show committee: Contrary to rumor, the show will not be moving to Tulsa. The group discussed Resolution 01-11, which would expand the senior age division to 14-18 instead of 14-17.

Market development and promotion committee: Chairman Gary Millar said the committee gets almost all of its funding from the registration of purebreds and Half-Arabians. Since those are down, the funding has nearly dried up. However, the committee still has many copies of literature that clubs can use to promote the breed. Millar said we need to see more TAIL programs at shows. It's a good way to promote Arabians to spectators. We need to reach out and get the community to consider Arabians. He suggested having booths at women's and kids shows, recreational shows, etc. And advertising in magazines, etc., that are distributed at doctor's offices, women's events, etc. ... Gary said the major project for the committee going forward is revamping the AHA web site. It is outdated and hard to navigate. It would cost \$94,000, and as of right now, that money is not available. The revamped web site would be an intranet, allowing clubs and AHA to communicate directly. The AHA Facebook page has 37,000 friends. ... AHA is also introducing Academy AHA to help barns establish lesson programs. We need to cultivate kids into the industry. Lesson programs are a way to do that. ... Millar said one way to help our Class A shows is to piggyback with a charity. That helps in fundraising, volunteers and especially promotion.

National and regional classes committee: Chairman Chris Bickford said the AHA board wants to have just one class list instead of two. Currently, there is one for Class A shows and another for regionals and nationals. ... The committee discussed classes to be added to the class list, including some for dressage and sport horse. Adding these classes to the list doesn't mean they will be added to regionals and nationals, just that they are available.

Canadian National show commission: The 2012 show will be held the same week in August or a week later. The commission is in discussions with the Brandon facility officials about the dates and other improvements we want, including more stalling, a bigger show ring, better warmup areas, etc. But, overall, the commission said it had heard nothing but good things about the new site at Brandon. Trainer Gordon Potts said there were things that need to be changed, but that it was an amazing show and AHA did a good job pulling it off in just four months. Commission member Tony Caughell said they are predicting at least 100 more horses next year. Chairman Gerald McDonald said the group gave the Brandon facility officials a significant wish list and they are working on it. He said adding yearling halter classes with jackpots furnished by Rae Dawn Arabians should increase entries.

Membership committee: The committee, which consists of 63 members, discussed the resolutions up for vote, and also resolution 01-10, which was sent to an ad hoc committee the year before. It concerned going back to a calendar membership year. AHA registrar Debbie Fuentes said if we went back to a calendar year, 73 percent of our members would not get a full year of benefits because they join later than December of the preceding year. ... Former youth coordinator Nancy Harvey brought up that a youth life membership is under consideration. It would give kids a membership until age 18. She also suggested that since we lose a lot of members when they turn 18 that we offer a discounted adult life membership to keep kids involved in AHA. ... Someone brought up that the Arabian Professional and Amateur Horsemen's group is promoting giveback clinics, where professional trainers will do clinics for just their expenses. This would be a good way for people to learn without the clinic costing a lot of money.

Registration commission: The group has been tasked to work on a strategic plan to help AHA move forward. Membership and registration numbers are down and we need to find a way to get them going back in the right direction. Registrar Debbie Fuentes had some interesting numbers: Five years ago, there were 41 horses exported overseas. It's now up to 550. As for Half-Arabians, 25 percent of them have grade parents. For foals conceived by transported semen, in 2010, it was only 25 percent of all foals born. The rate used to be 13-15 percent. The stallion-to-mare ratio is 2.3 stallions to every 1.0 mare. Commission chairman Cynthia Richardson said that it appears people may be starting to breed more. There was such a gap in breeding that the market is now short of young stock. According to the AHA database, the average age of broodmares is 18 years.

As for the resolutions, I will touch on the ones that I think affect AHAN. Of the 15 resolutions submitted, three were approved, six were approved with modification, one was disapproved and five were withdrawn.

1-11: Changing youth age to 14-18 instead of 14-17. Voting on this resolution was postponed until Saturday so that some of the youth could come in to speak for it. It passed, so kids get an extra year. It was deemed an extraordinary resolution, so it will go into effect Dec. 31, 2011, or when USEF approves it.

3-11: This resolution was withdrawn after the convention planning committee agreed to hold the AHA convention in Denver from 2014-16. Next year's convention will be in Denver, and the 2013 convention is set for Lexington, Ky. AHA can get \$25,000 from the Denver Marriott Tech Center every year if we hold the convention there. Money talks. The convention costs about \$40,000 if it's held anywhere but Denver. But the committee left it open that if a region steps forward and would cover the cost of holding the convention, it could bid to host convention and delegates would vote on the bid.

7-11: Bar shoes. Shoes may have only ONE bar, but it doesn't have to be across the heel.

8-11: Adding comparative judge system to AHA handbook. This was disapproved. This was the fourth straight year that this type of resolution has come up. Most of the delegates feel that the scorecard is the way we want to go. This resolution would have allowed Class A shows to use comparative judging instead of the scorecard in halter.

12-11: This approved resolution would add a test to the USEF rule book, allowing judges to call for kids to switch horses in national-level hunter pleasure classes.

15-11: Refund of 9-90 fee for a vet-out horse. This was approved, so if your horse is vetted-out before the show, you can receive your 9-90 fee back if the show allows it.

Region 6 show commission meeting

The major business for the show commission was to determine the site for the 2012 regional show. Myron Krause had led a committee that looked into five possible sites for the show – Rapid City, S.D.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Gillette, Wyo.; Douglas, Wyo.; and Lincoln, Neb. Region 6 director Cecile Hetzel-Dunn opened the meeting by talking about how the show commission's decision on a site should be based on what is best for the region, not just best for individuals or clubs, or just those who show. To have a successful region, we must have a successful regional show. And this year in Rapid City, the show was not a success, with just 107 horses and a \$4,000 loss. So something has to be done. She said that from the very beginning of Region 6, it was the only region that split show profits with its clubs. Like AHA treasurer David Corning said, "United we stand, divided we fall."

Cecile said that there are nine clubs in the region, with a total of more than 300 members. But there are approximately 600 AHA members in the region, so nearly half are not members of clubs and therefore have no representation.

According to the Region 6 Championship Show event manual, each club gets one representative on the show commission, and the regional director is also on the commission. The show manager is not supposed to have a vote. But because 2011 show manager Cheri Clark was the only delegate from her club, she was allowed, after a long discussion, to vote. The current show commission consists of Lonnie Arp, North Dakota AHA; Cheri Clark, Southern Montana AHA; Liz Dagnall, Tri Club; Claude Clark, Trail Crew; Laura Lee Anderson, Montana AHA; Carlton Huitt, Wyoming AHA; Greg Stoffel, Minn-I-Kota AHA; Jim Carr, Arabian Horse Association of Nebraska; Deb McGuire, South Dakota AHA; and director Cecile Hetzel-Dunn. Greg Stoffel was elected chairman of the show commission.

Cheri Clark made the report for the 2011 regional show and preshow: They had a total income of \$70,398, with expenses of \$74,533.03 for a \$4,154.97 loss. One of the expenses was \$5,842.08 for awards, since the region had to buy more trophies and ribbons. Because the 2011 show was so small, there are many trophies and ribbons left. There were \$1,200 in payouts this year, compared with \$160 last year (even with 40 less horses); and \$6,839.88 for hotel rooms, compared with \$2,331.77 the year before.

Cheri also reported on the Fort Robinson trail ride held in September. The number of participants (37) was down and the facility costs are increasing. This year's ride made \$1,305.92. Among the expenses was \$947.45 for gas. Cheri and Pam Inman have proposed that instead of paying Fort Robinson a set fee for the package, the region rent one of the officers' quarters and one barn, and the region would be responsible for meals and guides on the trails.

Cecile then gave a report on the region's funds. She had gotten the figures from treasurer Sue Hayden last week, but Cheri then updated them so they were current the day of the meeting. In total, the region has \$40,179, which includes the general fund, the Fort Robinson account, the show fund, a CD and the youth fund.

Discussion was then held concerning moving the show from Rapid City. Cheri said the Rapid City Convention and Visitors Bureau does not give us any help, and we only got one hotel room comped this year.

Myron Krause opened discussion on the show site, saying that the AHA Board of Directors has talked about possibly not allowing us to have a regional if the entry numbers dropped any more. With only 100 horses, it's really hard to break even because you have so many set costs.

After discussing the different sites, Carlton Huit moved that we hold the 2012 show in Rapid City. The vote of the show commission ended in a 5-5 tie, and since there is nothing in the bylaws on how to break a tie, it was determined to let the delegates vote on the issue at the regional caucus, which would follow.

At the regional caucus, Cecile announced that Sue Hayden no longer wants to be the regional treasurer. Greg Stoffel will take over until the next election, next September.

Delegates then gave reports for their clubs:

Greg Stoffel said that Minn-I-Kota hadn't held a Class A show for several years. It holds two community shows each year, with about 80 horses at each. The profits go toward supporting the youth. He said the club is looking at holding an AHA one-day show.

Liz Dagnall said the Tri club held two sanctioned rides this year and a dressage schooling show.

Lonnie Arp said the North Dakota AHA had five endurance/fun rides this year.

Steve Hugus of the Wyoming AHA said his club held one community show and some fun rides. Its membership has fallen below 50 members.

Cheri Clark reported for the Southern Montana AHA, which held two one-day shows that were open to other breeds.

Laura Lee Anderson of the Montana AHA said her club's show was cancelled this year because of the EVH-1 outbreak.

Jim Carr reported for AHAN, saying that we had a very successful Class A show and also two AHA one-day shows.

Claude Clark of Trail Crew said his group had a fun ride and would be available to help anyone who wanted to do a recreational trail ride.

Youth coordinator Joan Rozeboom wants to grow membership. Julie Koch told Joan that she would post any youth news on the Region 6 web site.

In new business, Cecile appointed Deb McGuire, Laura Lee Anderson, Greg Stoffel, Sarah Coker and Julie Koch to a committee to review and revise the regional bylaws.

Because of concerns raised by the Montana AHA, the election of regional officers was postponed until September of 2012.

In other new business, Keith McGuire moved that the region bond the regional officers, show manager and show secretary. Motion passed. Deb McGuire has a customer who writes bonds and she will take care of it.

In old business, we went back to discussing the regional show site. Cheri Clark apologized to Jim Carr for comments she had made in the hallway during the break and said she would abstain from voting on Carlton's motion to hold the show in Rapid City. She said as manager, she believes holding the show in Rapid City would be a struggle.

We also learned that Pam Teller, the assistant manager of the facility in Rapid City, said it would cost us \$1,875 each year to get out of our agreement with the facility. We have two years left on the agreement.

The delegates voted 6-5 to defeat Carlton's motion to hold the 2012 show in Rapid City. Cheri suggested we consider a rotation for 2012-13, with the 2013 show held in Rapid City the last weekend in June.

Keith McGuire then moved to hold the show in Lincoln on June 18-24. That motion was defeated 6-5. Claude Clark then moved to hold the show in Douglas, Wyo., but that motion was defeated 7-4. Sarah Coker then moved that the 2012 show be held in Lincoln, and then rotated west in 2013. That motion passed 9-2. If we return to Rapid City in 2013, delegates decided to renegotiate the contract with the facility, because it didn't include a buyout clause.

Greg Stoffel moved that we increase the Region 6 grants to regional clubs to \$350. That motion passed. Any regional club can apply for the grant money and use it to promote the Arabian horse. It was hoped that the clubs in the central and

western parts of the region would use the money to promote their shows on the years the regional show was in the eastern end of the region.

Cheri then moved that up to \$3,000 be allocated for the development of a sport horse event in the central or western part of the region as something for those who don't want to come to Lincoln for the regional show.

We finally adjourned at 11:40 p.m., nearly six hours after we began.