

## MAINE EQUINE WELFARE ALLIANCE (MEWA)

October 20, 2010

Time - 6:30 pm

Location - Maine Farm Bureau Office, Augusta, Maine

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.”*

All attendees were in person ~ no call-ins ~ see separate sheet for attendees names and contact information.

- 1) Welcome ~ Chairperson Michelle Melaragno
- 2) Volunteer to take the October meeting minutes ~ Julie Kenney
- 3) Introductions by those in attendance
- 4) Acceptance of September Meeting Minutes ~ moved, seconded and passed to accept the minutes.
- 5) Membership ~ Chair Melaragno talked about membership dues, especially for the new attendees. Reminded us to try and recruit new folks for the next meeting in November.
- 6) Guest speaker Bobby Silcott ~ Animal Control Officer (ACO) for the Naples, Maine area ~ brought to our attention the POM (Pet Oxygen Masks) project that he started and is fundraising for. He is trying to distribute these masks to all fire departments throughout the state. Silcott teaches pet CPR and the use of these oxygen masks and is always looking for places that would be interested in receiving instruction. He continued by talking about using these masks when responding to horses in need, especially in the case of a fire. He also gave an example of using the large sized mask on a newborn foal that was in distress upon birth and subsequently was saved due to receiving the oxygen. Silcott cautioned the group to try and befriend the horse owners, instead of be accusatory, and what we could and could not do when on their property. Chair Melaragno explained that responding/working directly with horse owners that have *not* asked for help is not what this group is all about. Silcott recommended, as individuals, to build a good relationship with our local ACO. Chair Melaragno asked Silcott how he gets a “following” of interest and support and he responded by saying that you have to keep asking for support (for every three you ask for support, only one will help); to keep talking about the subject especially when asking for money; use social networks such as Facebook; and to be repetitive.
- 7) Petsmart Charities ~ Chair Melaragno heard back and they have declined supporting us at this time. They will take another look at us after we’ve been operating at least for a year.
- 8) Bylaws ~ the group has not yet had the chance to meet.
- 9) Directors & Officers liability insurance ~ we are waiting for details of costs, etc. ~ Farm Family Insurance has been the only company contacted so far. Melaragno asked for suggestions for other insurance companies from anyone at the meeting. On a side note, one attendee mentioned going to USEF.org and looking at purchasing a policy for an individual and their horse for only \$35 per year.
- 10) Web hosting ~ suggestions so far have been Mainehost.com and Godaddy.com ~ much talk around the table about other suggestions. We did all feel that going with .org status would lend the most credibility to our group. We ended the discussion at getting three or four site options with the pricing so that we could begin to move forward with this. It seemed that the consensus was to make the website startup a priority of the group.

- 11) Assistance requests ~ 2 requests right now and both are for euthanasia. Melaragno and Dr. Janelle Tirrell have each been in contact with the two horse owners. MEWA will be providing some financial support for each. One owner has issues with the how/where of disposal and so began a discussion around the table. There are some towns which provide composting areas at their town dump; some large dairy farms allow composting; talk of the legalities of how the compost is used in the future; and issues on trailering/transporting of carcasses.
- 12) Outreach ~ much discussion about different ways to get MEWA information out to the general public: speaking at breed meetings (i.e. Maine Morgan) and at other professional meetings such as the Maine Equine Practitioners; asking groups/breed associations/4H clubs/ME dressage/ME Quarter Horse/etc. to spread the word; and networking. Discussion about the NE Horseman's Conference early next year. We talked about getting a list of folks interested in doing the public speaking and then set up training for them to keep the presentation content similar and on track with what MEWA is trying to promote. Jan Marconi knows of someone who could print/copy our color brochure for free ~ she will confirm and report back. Janelle Tirrell has found where she can get the color brochures for \$.15 each.
- 13) Chair Melaragno reminded the committee chairs to forward meeting dates/times and the meeting minutes along to her at the same time they are sent to the individual members of the committee.
- 14) Committee Reports ~
  - a. **Temporary Foster and Rescue Homes** ~ Chair: Jan & Jim Marconi ~ Lots of questions from this group. They are asking about insurance when taking in a rescue horse; who is responsible? They feel there needs to be a surrender contract and so who should it be surrendered to? Do we pay expenses for the surrendered horse? Who's responsible for what? Adoption fee? Table discussion included MEWA being only a facilitator or conduit, or a referral agency; that we are not in a position of actually taking ownership of anyone's horse. We then continued on about whether a new foster home is adequate; who makes that decision; do we have any responsibility on follow-up, etc? The Chair still feels this is a "muddy" issue! Discussion followed about referring to foster homes as being temporary only; where the horse may end up going back to the original owner after a set time period. Would hay and feed assistance be given to the foster/surrender home? Shouldn't we hook up horse owners with their local horse rescues first? The Maine Stable Guide was brought up as a resource list and the possibility of resurrecting that resource.
  - b. **Fundraising subcommittee** - No meeting held yet. They have set their first meeting date for November 16, 2010. It was mentioned that the website needs to be up and running before fundraising can begin.
  - c. **Hay and Feed Assistance** - Chair: Deb Plengay ~ They have met and decided to use the Oregon State protocol to start/work with. She reported that discussion was brought up that good quality hay has a shelf life so that any stored hay for MEWA would be rotated out, either to a local rescue if the hay is still good or sell for mulch and use the money to buy more good quality hay.
  - d. **Vet and Farrier Assistance** ~ Chair: Janelle Tirrell ~ Reports that they have had much discussion. Vets need to respond and assist right away. Let horse owners know what MEWA can help with. The best way is to send money directly to the vets. Have vouchers available to all vets throughout the state to give to owners in need.
  - e. **Public Education & Awareness** ~ Chair: Melanie Langmeyer ~ No committee meeting since last month's general meeting. They are waiting for the website to be created so that the web address can be included in the brochure. Chair Langmeyer has contacted several feed companies to get the brochures on the feed delivery trucks with no response. See discussion notes above regarding the cost of copying/printing the brochure.
  - f. **Political Action** ~ Chair: Missy Libby ~ They want to see if convicted animal abusers can be on the same registry as other abusers here in Maine like they are in New York. The group is waiting on liability insurance information back from agencies.
  - g. **Resources** ~ Chair: Donna Hughes ~ No meeting was held.
- 15) Chair Michelle Melaragno started closing our meeting by discussing why/how MEWA came to be started. She

is getting a lot of questions about the formation and how it coincided with the large media attention that surrounded the farm in Clinton, Maine. Melaragno pointed out that MEWA formation came directly from LD 458, commissioned by the Maine Legislature. We discussed how there are many misconceptions on how this MEWA group was formed and proposed putting a link directly to LD 458 on the website for credibility.

16) Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted  
Julie Kenney  
10/22/10