

USBCHA Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

Strang Ranch, Carbondale CO

September 11, 2019

The meeting commenced about 7:30pm. Members were welcomed by President Peter Hall, who offered his thanks to Bridget Strang, Terry Murry and Nancy Penley, who managed the organization of the trial; Strang Ranch – Kit, Scotty, Lorrie and Bridget – for proving the venue; and all the volunteers that made the Finals a success. Peter also acknowledged the Directors and Officers of the USBCHA and ABCA, and the Trial Committee – Emil Ludecke, Bridget Strang, Patrick Shannahan, Joni Tietjen, Lyle Lad and Dennis Edwards – for setting the Open and Nursery courses. Major sponsors for the trial particularly ABCA and Purina Pro Plan were acknowledged, as well. Finally, Peter gave a special thank you to USBCHA past-President Carol Clawson for her assistance in his transition to President.

Kristi Oikawa Remembrance

Peter then gave a brief appreciation of Kristi Oikawa, USBCHA’s webmaster, who passed away in June. Passionate about her dogs, an advocate for the working border collie, she volunteered her expertise to help others in the community with their websites and IT projects. With a positive outlook, she set an important example that life should be well-lived within the moment. Peter then turned the podium over to Patricia MacCrae and Derek Fisher, who presented an award to Mike Merriman in her name.

Financial Report

USBCHA Treasurer Marianna Schreeder then presented the financials for the past fiscal year (calendar year 2018) to the membership, which showed a modest net income, but sustainable balances in the HA checking, saving and investment accounts. With respect to the latter, the USBCHA is continuing its conservative strategy with 100% of investment funds in government bonds.

Director Elections

Peter then announced the election results for open USBCHA Board of Director seats, as follows:

District	Direct-Elect	Term (yr)
1	Mary Minor	2
2	Jan Stebbins	2
3	Wyatt Fleming	2
4	Kay Stephens	2
5	Jennifer Boznos	2
6	Lori Cunningham	2
7	Sue Schoen	2
8	Frank Smith	3
9	Amanda Milliken	3
10	Louanne Twa	3
At-Large	Cy Peterson	3

Website

Peter then gave a brief overview of maintenance challenges associated with the USBCHA. The HA has received plenty of feedback from members and is aware of the website's shortcomings. One of Kristi Oikawa's major initiative was to clean up and improve the website to make it more useful to members, and her sudden passing was a setback for that initiative. Peter noted that Linda DeJong, Jo Murphy have been picking up the slack in the interim, and is planning to make a recommendation for the webmaster position to the Board of Directors at the next BOD meeting, where he will also put forward a plan for addressing its shortcomings.

Ethel Conrad Award

The meeting followed with the presentation of the Ethel Conrad award. Peter noted the award is at the President's discretion, and for 2019 the recipient was Terry Murray for her investment of time, energy and ideas in support of the Finals. Terry has also helped local trial grow and has given the grass roots of trialing a boost in Colorado. Terry has always stepped up to help some of the newer trials get off the ground (e.g. Brenham) and was clearly one of the major reasons the 2019 Finals at Strang Ranch was going to be a major success.

Roundtable Session

Peter then convened a roundtable session of the membership by first noting the growing stature of this sport, greater public attendance, and higher levels of competition in trials, but also at least an appearance of a decline in sportsmanship or comradeship. It shows in how handlers interact with each other, with the public, with judges and how trials are run. Peter mentioned one committee in particular, called Judging Education and chaired by Terri Warner, that is looking into this issue. Peter asked the membership to coalesce into a number of groups, with each group discussing a question for a short period of time, followed by a brief summary to the membership. Below are the questions that were posed to the membership and the ideas and suggestions put forward by the roundtable participants.

1. Excluding animal rights organizations and/or government regulation, what are the 5 greatest threats to the future of sheepdog trialing in North America?

- Access to sheep/venues
- Cost of trialing (entry fees, traveling to trials)
- Lack of new/young handlers
 - No mentoring system
 - Fewer novice trials
- Over-commercialization of the sport
- Expense of attending clinics
 - USBCHA subsidy to help pay for clinics

Basically, the consensus of this group is that trialing has drifted away from the roots of the sport, to which we need to return.

2. *(a) What is the most significant difference among judges in how runs in sheepdog trials are scored?*

- Grips
- Sheds
- Off course
- Bias on who is running

(b) What degree of interaction should there be between handlers and judges at major trials such as the Finals, Meeker and Bluegrass?

- There should be no interaction, period.
- Judges should have an escort.

3. *List 5 improvements that would make the USBCHA website more useful to members.*

- Needs to be smartphone friendly, especially iPhones/iPads
- "Upcoming Trials" page should start with the current date
- Points database is slow loading
- Lose fixed header when scrolling on some pages
- Organization of information is not intuitive or user-friendly
 - Anyone should be able to find what they are looking for without struggling
 - Rules/guidelines under Governance
 - Trouble finding entry forms for Finals

4. *What are the 5 most important things trial hosts can do to ensure that their trials are perceived to be fair for all entrants?*

- Avoid judging bias
 - Different judge everyday
- Transparency
 - Communicate clearly
- Even sheep
- Be well-organized
 - Stay within the rules
- Consistent and quality set-out
- Attention to small details
 - Water
 - Paperwork
- Entry policy/guidelines
 - Maybe more consistency in entry forms, other policies
- Timely results

5. *(a) What should USBCHA do to encourage young people to enter the sport?*

- Approach the 4-H and work with them to help 4-H clubs to progress their programs to encourage young handlers either through funding or clinics

(b) What can Open handlers do to help new or novice handlers to succeed in the sport?

- Have a clinic, followed by a novice trial with help from a mentor (at post).
- Match an Open handler with a novice handler and help them during the year.
- Conduct clinics on stockmanship
 - Novice handlers must know how to treat the livestock, which will lead to success on the field.

6. *Given that more and more enter the sport with non-agricultural backgrounds, how can USBCHA, trial hosts, judges and individual handlers promote stockmanship among new handlers?*

- Judges: Emphasize stockmanship at the handlers' meeting, special instructions for hot weather running
- USBCHA: Distribute a new membership packet, rule book, judging guidelines, guidelines or best practices for putting on a trial, stockmanship guidelines, possibly a YouTube video
 - Show what is acceptable, what is not
- Trial Hosts: Hot weather guidelines, winter guidelines, describing what will and will not be allowed
- Individual: See something, say something, take responsibility

7. *If you could add, change or eliminate one rule or convention in this sport, what would it be?*

- Develop guidelines for trial committees on the care and handling of the sheep, i.e. the proper care, feeding, watering, shading and condition of the sheep.

8. *Beyond USBCHA's existing liability insurance policy and information on the website, what other resources should be available to trial hosts?*

- Develop a package for hosts that contains guidelines, forms and helpful suggestions (best practices?) on things like payout, score sheets, running order, livestock care, and set-out assignments.

9. *(a) What are the greatest impediments for members to become judges, and how can these be removed?*

- Member doesn't know the rules well enough to judge
- Prospective judge too concerned about being criticized by peers
- Member thinks existing judges never make a mistake, and is worried about make a wrong decision
- There needs to be mentorship/apprenticeship support for new judges

(b) Should the USBCHA provide continuing education to judges via meetings, forums or other resources?

- USBCHA should fund judge seminars, mentorship programs for every district yearly.