

MOUNTAIN STATES MEAT GOAT ASSOCIATION UPDATE

December 28, 2009

Just a few notes to keep everyone up to date on developing initiatives in the MSMGA.

WETHER SALES – Don Wager put a great wether shipment together on December 11, 2009. Just over 930 goats were shipped with excellent results. This may very well be a record for MSMGA shipments. All producers were paid at the time the goats were weighed and loaded. We are making excellent progress in our marketing efforts. The challenge now is to continue to solidify our working relationships with a diverse member group and to seek ways to expand the scope of our pooling efforts to serve greater numbers of our members. More on that at our annual meeting and as the new year develops. Don negotiated a premium price and everyone seemed to be pleased with the results. That effort alone adds significant value to your membership in MSMGA.

WEB SITE – Thanks to everyone who participated in the development and design of the website and the logo. A committee has been appointed to get a new website up and running in the next few weeks. This committee includes: Carolyn Buckner, Brittney Sterner, Debbie Meyers, Fred Rothluetner, Carol McNeill and Erica Ashby. Included in the website will be materials and articles of interest to our diverse membership. The website will serve as our source of distribution of information and will include the information previously included in our newsletter. A big thanks goes out to Carolyn Buckner for her tireless efforts in developing and distributing the materials for review.

MEMBERSHIP LIST and MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL – Included on the website will be a current membership list with contact information as well as a listing of your own web addresses. We are striving to keep the listing current and include only those who are current members of the MSMGA. It is time to renew your membership for 2010. Be sure to get your membership application and dues in to be included on the website. An application is included with this mailing. With the great look of our website, this too will be another benefit of membership as you market your goats and goat products.

ANNUAL MEETING – The Board of Directors has called an Annual Meeting for Friday February 12, 2010 at 4:30 pm at the Utah State University Extension Office in Tooele Utah. This meeting has been called to fill Board of Directors positions that are open or have expired. If you have an interest in running for one of the open positions or if you know of someone well qualified to serve as a member of the Board of Directors, please submit names, contact information and qualifications and a biographical summary to sheepbranch@msn.com. The annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the Sheep and Goat Education Day. Events will begin with a dinner and entertainment following the annual meeting and a full day of presentations and demonstrations on critical issues to sheep and goat producers. Last year the day proved to be very helpful and this year looks to be even better. A lunch of lamb stew and goat jambalaya with all the trimmings is included in your registration fee.. Registration can be made on line at: <http://extension.usu.edu/saged/>

BYLAWS AMMENDMENTS – The Board of Directors is proposing that we amend the bylaws to reduce the number of members of the Board of Directors from the current number of 7 to 5. According to bylaws a mail vote of 2/3 of members is required to amend the bylaws. Get your membership up to date as ballots will be mailed by January 25, 2010 with the results being announced at the Annual Meeting.

LOGO MERCHANDISE – We are in the process of developing MSMGA hats and other merchandise. Our plan is to have them available at the Annual Meeting or for purchase on the website.

2010 EVENTS – There are a number of events for 2010 that are either set or in the planning stages. Please do your part to support as many as possible with both your participation and helping with organization and management. If you are aware of upcoming events please submit them to the website committee for inclusion. A complete list will be regularly updated on the new website but a few that are set or in the final planning stages include:

Feb 12 – 13, 2010	Tooele UT Day	MSMGA Annual Meeting/Sheep and Goat Education
March 28, 2010	Grand Junction CO	Firecracker Market Goat Sale w/ breeding stock sale
June 5 – 6, 2010	Rifle CO	Double Barrel Classic Jackpot
June 2010	Coalville UT	Grand Summit Classic Show and Sale
July 3, 2010	Grand Junction CO	Market Goat Jackpot
Sept 2010	Salt Lake City, UT	Utah State Fair Boer Goat Show with Market Wether Sale and Doe Kid Futurity Sale
October 2010	Utah	Herd Builder Commercial Goat Sale

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY – In early December 2009, many members of the MSMGA participated in an online member survey. The results indicated the diversity of our membership both geographically and in terms of interests. This survey provides some very helpful information and can serve as a roadmap for charting our course in the coming years. I have developed a fairly unbiased summary and limited analysis of the results. These results are attached. Now it is your turn to tell us how to apply the data to developing the MSMGA.

Thanks for your support of the many things we are trying to accomplish for our members. Please plan to attend the annual meeting and to support the events in the coming year. . . and have a Happy New Year.

Steve Burton

MSMGA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

For how long have you been a member of the MSMGA?

Less than 1 year	0%
1 – 3 years	46
4 – 5 years	21
Over 5 years	33

- One third of our members have had extensive experience with the organization but almost half have only been members of 3 years or less. The bulge we see in the newest members suggest that we might seek additional was to retain new members.

How well does the MSMGA serve you needs as goat producer?

Very well	9%
Fairly well	52
Not too well	35
Not well at all	4

- These responses indicate a positive but not a compelling attitude among our members. Although a very small percentage are highly dissatisfied, about four in ten indicate some level of dissatisfaction. For more details on the reasons for these “soft” responses, we turn to the actual reasons for their answer to the initial rating question.

VERBATIM COMMENTS

There are a bunch of opportunities to sell goats but not many to show.

We are not an active member, but the emails satisfy our needs.

Shows, Education Day, Sales, Networking with other producers.

Haven't had our name and information in the directory.

If I lived closer to other members it would be easier to access services.

I have only used MSMGA for 1 shipment of wethers, and it was costly.

Most of your activities are too far away for me to participate in, but, my website and phone gets a lot of activity from your membership listing. So I get some good from being a member.

I don't have goats to ship, the shows I can go to with just an ABGA membership and with members spread across such a wide radius it is impossible for the MSMGA to have meetings and clinics that are located close to all the members

I am mostly interested in the Junior Program. The last two years has had nothing to offer for this.

I think the doe futurity is a good start but we need more overall support for this.

The times I have sold, I have been very satisfied with the shipping arrangements and price received for my product.

I don't sell my goats for meat but I do show and I appreciate the ABGA shows that you have put on

Some years I hear about the goat shipments and some years I don't. This year has been both I didn't hear about the first goat shipments but I did get in on this last one.

I am not a member because I don't see any benefits to becoming one at this point.

I helped create the association. and was on the board for several years.

Stuff needs to be done to increase membership - incentives.

Some members have been too self serving; junior show rules have not always been followed; not always the best team players; for help with goat issues and ideas, this group can be wonderful.

I live too far away to be able to participate in most of their activities.

Its improved a lot in the last year. I think the new board has things going the right way

The Association needs to be aware of all the producers and try to organize and educate them where they are in the geographical sense, business sense and their goat sense Far from the loop, not in Utah or Colorado.

When I am having issues (marketing, health, government, etc.) I have an organization to turn to.

We are located in Nebraska and the majority of events happen west of us.

Which of the following best describes your operation or interest in goats?

Hobby breeder	17%
Registered breeder	46
Wether (show) breeder	12
Commercial breeder	21
Other (primarily a combination of two or more of the above)	4

- Almost half of the members reporting consider themselves to be registered breeders followed by commercial breeders, hobby breeders and those into the show wether stock. It is clear that while there is considerable diversity in interests, the largest segment are the registered breeders.

What should be the first and second most important functions or priorities of the MSMGA?

	FIRST	SECOND	TOTAL
Educational programs	32	23	55
Wether marketing efforts	14	14	28
Open/Registered Shows	9	9	18
Youth Wether/Market Shows	9	14	23
Registered Sales	5	9	14
Market Wether Sales	0	9	8
Commercial Sales	23	9	32
Other	9	14	23

Specific Other Comments

All sales

The MSMGA should stay as broad as its members with education , shows and sales

All

We also like the youth/market wether shows. Our future is with our youth

- Clearly, our number one priority ought to focus on educational information and processes for our members. This presents a number of problems due to the geographic spread of MSMGA members, yet it also represents an opportunity to work together on several initiatives. Once such initiative is the new website with the opportunity to provide a large amount of diverse information. Our website committee is looking into the prospect of webcasts of seminars sponsored by MSMGA for those otherwise unable to attend. Second is an idea to seek to reach out on a more local level with educational programs. This plan requires an improved local organizational structure as well as cost considerations but appears to have some potential based on our experience in Southeastern Idaho.
- Commercial sales, wether marketing efforts and youth wether shows are next most frequently mentioned as priorities for the MSMGA. While they represent a diversity of interests, there is little doubt of both interest and room in the tent to accommodate these priorities and at the same time address those mentioned less frequently.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the numbers of goats they own by type. The distribution below does not include one respondent indicating ownership of 900 commercial bred bucks and does. That number was excluded due to the fact that it would skew the remaining data. In reporting the data we have calculated the distribution of buck and doe types separately. Note that these data do not indicate the actual or average numbers but rather the distribution of goats by type among association members.

Percentage Distribution of Goats Among MSMGA Members

BUCKS

Commercial Boer influenced bucks	6%
Percentage Boer bucks	3
Full blood Boer bucks	78
Diary bucks	12
Other meat breed bucks	1

DOES

Commercial Boer influenced does	12%
Percentage Boer does	25
Full blood Boer does	51
Diary does	11
Other meat breed does	1

How likely would you be to participate as a BUYER in a ___ sale in 2010?

	Commercial Sale	Registered Sale	Market Wether Sale
Very Likely	4%	13	9
Likely	25	38	18
Not too Likely	17	21	27
Not likely at all	54	28	46

How likely would you be to participate as a SELLER in a ___ sale in 2010?

	Commercial Sale	Registered Sale	Market Wether Sale
Very Likely	25%	33	32
Likely	17	38	36
Not too Likely	29	12	18
Not likely at all	29	17	14

- Based on the responses of this group, clearly not representative of the commercial breeders, interested buyers at future sales are primarily looking for registered animals although about three in ten members say they would be likely or very likely to participate as a buyer in a commercial or a market wether sale.
- On the other hand, there is considerably more interest in participating as a seller in all three types of sales. It is interesting to note that 68% of our members say they would be likely to participate as a seller in a market wether sale compared 42% indicating a interest in selling at a commercial sale.
- Overall, we appear to have a large pool of potential sellers but not nearly enough buyers interested in future sales. The remedy to this disparity seems to be in part a better understanding of our potential buyers, likely not currently MSMGA members. We cannot survive if we simply continue to sell what we perceive to be high than meat value goats to ourselves. I would call on the membership to help us get a better understanding of the local as well as broader markets for both commercial and market wether goats. To date, I know both groups of potential buyers are out there but I have only heard anecdotal data about the size

and scope of these groups. As a sidebar, it might also require that we take a hard and even a more honest look at the products we intend to put into these marketing channels.

Where would you like to see these sales held? (multiple responses allowed)

Southeastern Idaho	35%
Utah	65
Western Wyoming	44
Eastern Wyoming	30
Western Colorado	26
Other	30

- No surprises here, people want sales held close to where they live. However, it makes sense to go to the buyers or better yet, build a sale that people will come to. I am reminded of my first trip to the Registered Sheep Sale in Sedalia Missouri. In addition to offering the worst weather I can image, the town has no good hotels and the few restaurants there are even worse. Yet, they literally sell thousands of sheep of every breed known to man and even some Boer goats. It is not the location but the event that draws the crowd.

What is the best time of year to hold a fullblood or percentage registered sale?

What is the best time of year to hold a commercial sale?

	Sale Type	
	Registered	Commercial
Jan, Feb, Mar	9%	5
Apr, May, June	41	40
July, Aug, Sept	32	25
Oct, Nov, Dec	18	30

- It came as a surprise that more suggested a spring commercial sale than suggested a fall sale. It would be interesting to tap into the positions of the commercial buyers.

Survey respondents reacted to a series of statements about the MSMGA and the goat industry and then indicated their opinions in the form as either a strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree response. Tabulation of these responses allow us to measure both the direction and intensity of their opinions.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We need to place more emphasis on keeping the website updated.	58%	42	0	0
If it was well managed, the MSMGA Website could be a useful tool for me as a goat producer.	54	42	4	0
I feel like I am too far away from other members to fully participate in the MSMGA.	13	37	29	21
I don't really feel like I am associated with an organization that is of value to me in my interests in meat goats.	9	27	46	18
I would like to see more MSMGA events organized and driven by people from my area or region.	43	48	9	0
I see the MSMGA primarily as an organization to help me market my goats.	5	57	33	5
I see the MSMGA primarily as an organization to put on shows and sales.	13	50	33	4
I am committed to working with other MSMGA members to build the goat industry in my area.	49	39	4	8
I would like to see the MSMGA market hats, jackets and other logo items	57	43	0	0

- From these responses there seems to be several areas and likely initiatives that should require some immediate attention and exploitation as a means to build the organization. These include: a top tier website, a locally driven almost chapter level group, an ability to work together with other members for common good types of development and (it might sound strange) logo items to bind the group together and create so common bonds.

- We actually see much softer responses on the role of MSMGA in organizing shows and sales and even in facilitation of product sales.

Observations, Conclusions and Applications of the Data

1. First, it is clear that while the image of MSMGA among current members is positive, it is not compelling. Compared to other data I have seen on both profit and non profit organizations, our image has to be characterized as about average. However, there are numerous opportunities to add value to the organization and to membership as we work through the input provided. The key seems to lie in a better understanding of our members. We ought to all be committed to moving the needle on this number. The MSMGA is not a business, it is an association of people with a common interest working for the common good. As an organization our success is in the level of participation by our members. Move off the sidelines and get in the action. You will have some disappointments, you will be mad at the judge when your best goat stands last in the next show and you might even be offended by other members. The satisfaction and payoff comes when you see a loose knit group of people who own goats develop friendship and relationships that last a lifetime, long after the goats are gone. For most us, life goes on long after the goats are gone.
 - a. As we review the suggestions for improving MSMGA, the common thread seems to be enhancing our communications. For many, MSMGA is almost a “virtual organization” . Given our geographic diversity, members could go for years without a face to face meeting with another member. This may be neither good nor bad, it is just the way it is. Our job is to seek ways to better keep our members linked together, no matter where they live.
2. The MSMGA is primarily an organization of people who consider themselves registered breeders. This coupled with the hobby and market wether breeders suggests that most are fairly small operators who may have commercial interests but likely as a source for end of the year cleanup. Efforts have been made to help members move their second tier animals into commercial channels with some good results. However, geographic diversity again appears to be a limiting factor. We need a better plan to make this work for the whole group.
3. Educational efforts (which may be included under the communication heading) are rated as the number one priority for our organization. These efforts could be in a face to face setting and would likely be associated with another event like a show. However, the MSMGA website emerges as a significant opportunity in addressing educational issues. Wether marketing efforts is a major opportunity for the organization we will as shows, sales (including commercial sales) and youth programs. These areas are so close in their relative importance that it is clear that we need to be able to juggle multiple balls at the same time and build a tent that is big enough to accommodate diverse interests. To fail to expand but rather to choose to limit the scope of our organizational efforts will only limit the longevity of the organization.
4. With the exception of a single commercial breeder, almost all of the goats in our inventory are “boer based”. In other words, the MSMGA is primarily a boer goat

association. Currently, 81% of the bucks and 76% of the does are fullblood or percentage boer animals.

5. With large numbers of our members seeking sales opportunities for both commercial and market wether animals, we need a much better understanding of who is in our potential market base, where they are located and what their product expectations and specifications might be. The realities of the market will quickly help us identify those products which are suitable in these channels. In very specific terms, we need to identify, by name, the buyers likely to purchase replacement breeding stock and make a realistic estimation of the numbers and price ceilings they are looking at. I would suggest that if these numbers work out, we develop a good analysis and perhaps even take a crap shoot at setting up a commercial type "Herd Builder" sale. Erica Ashby has put her money where her mouth is and has put a Market Wether Sale together. I personally have an interest in producing and marketing replacement commercial bucks and does. But, I have not seen solid evidence of potential for this market. Instead I see many producers confusing commercial animals with cull animals. A good goat is a good goat, it doesn't really matter if we call it a market wether, a seedstock animal or a commercial animal. They all ought to look about like different shades of the same color.
6. Within some limits, it is the quality of the sale or show not the location of the sale or show that determines its success.
7. At the end of the day, MSMGA is not a business. We are, in reality, a non-profit organization. For many, their goat operations are also non-profits as well. Again that is neither bad nor good, it is simply the way it is and likely the way it will stay for the short term future. Yet, MSMGA fills a need as a social, educational and even a hobby based organization. On the other hand, there may be opportunities to apply the education and the associations in such a way that we can turn a profit in our own operations.
8. I was interested in two sets of responses that were powerful enough to get my attention. First, there is a sense that we need to be more locally based. Second, there are good numbers of people who expressed a willingness to participate with others to build the presence of meat goats in their local areas. I believe that we can have a virtual organization and have long term appeal to many. However, if significant and localized participation was enhanced, the potential to grow the organization and develop greater levels of loyalty is there. We are seeing, and I am watching with great interest, the developments in western Colorado with their focus on market wethers including shows, sales and even jackpots. At the same time, I would call on others to step up and make something happen. It is likely not a task for the faint of heart or for those who are thinned skinned. Speaking specifically to those responding in the affirmative that we needed more local involvement and indicated their willingness to work with others to build the organization, now is the time to act.
9. Finally, we have an ongoing example of the power of the group as with synergize our collective efforts to create things that are otherwise individually impossible. Those who have so willingly participated in the development and fine tuning of the MSMGA website and the associated logo have my undying admiration for a job well done. If you are a part of the MSMGA to make a buck or gain fame, you are likely in the wrong place. On the other hand, if you are looking for an opportunity to work with a group of people who are willing to give their all to put a world class product together, your search has ended. Based on the results of our member survey and based on what I already know

about communications the website enhancements is a significant part of the future of the MSMGA. We owe these fellow goat producers a debt of gratitude for their unselfish service.

10. This newsletter and attempted analysis of the survey results likely raises more questions than it answers. Don't panic, that is part of the plan. Take the results and use the MSMGA chat group to offer your opinions, make your suggestions and commit to building the organization.

Mountain States Meat Goat Association Membership Application

2010

[PRINT CLEARLY]

Name		
Ranch Name		
Address		
City/State/Zip		
Telephone		Email
Website		
Junior Membership		
Name	Birthdate	Amount

TOTAL JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP DUES (\$10 per youth)		
TOTAL RANCH DUES (\$30 per year)		
TOTAL ENCLOSED		

For inclusion on member roster, which of the following describes your operation.

Registered Breeder Wether Breeder Commercial Breeder

Make checks payable to MSMGA

Mail form and checks to: Greg Mauchley
11375 North 10800 West
Bothwell, UT 84337-9228