

**2012 APHA Convention Report – Shannon O’Dell (WA)**  
**Sept. 29 – Oct. 1, 2011 – Vancouver, WA**

Wow – I can’t believe it’s been nearly a month since the conclusion of the APHA convention here in our backyard. This was my first year attending the convention and I am proud to be representing Washington State as your alternate director.

My first order of business after registering was to attend the Director Orientation – here I received my alternate pin and got a brief run down on how the Convention / Workshop system operates and my role in the machine. I’m sure I will learn a lot more at Workshop in the spring since it does appear that’s where most of the heavy lifting gets done for everything that gets voted on and discussed at the annual convention.

Then on Thursday afternoon was the General Membership meeting. The primary focus of the meeting was the general state of APHA – as expected in this tough economy memberships, registration, program participation, racing purses, shows, etc. are all down. But the percent of decline has slowed from the same time period last year (for example registrations are down 15% this year but were down 23% for the same timeframe last year). The bright spot for the Association is that International memberships and registrations and show entries are up (their show entries are up 43%!). The good news is that APHA remains financially stable due to some restructuring and the way investments have been performing.

It was reported that the Breeders Futurity program continues to grow at all 4 levels.

The Gelding Plus program will be discontinued but APHA will be using those same funds to try to help out regional clubs through a sponsorship program (more on this later). While I personally liked the Gelding Plus program I think this is a better and broader use of those same monies.

The Regional Club website will be revamped so that clubs can login and get access to those people in their area that are participating in PAC to invite them to open shows or to get them involved with the club.

Other things talked about were the change to UC Davis being the official testing lab for APHA so that we can increase the types of tests available. Also, the USLGE program has had a very successful impact on APHA memberships/ownerships/show entries in France since the program’s implementation in 2003. Last year APHA gave roughly \$80,000 to the USLGE program. I must admit this was the first I had heard of the program but was impressed with what they have been doing and it is clear that they have helped to improve the Paint industry in Europe (including the sale of horses from North America to Europe).

That took care of Thursday business and it was off to the Welcome Reception to meet & greet new faces.

Friday was a full day – it started with the Board of Directors meeting where all the rule changes were voted on. The list of rule changes that were voted on (and their description) can be found at <http://www.painthorsejournal.com/issue/0811/FreeArticle/index.html#/2/> (pages 3-13).

All of the rules passed with the exception of:

Control GR-010.A.4                      Control RG-020 The Registries (voided due to an invalid petition)  
Control SC-160.new T

After the rule changes were voted on, the Executive Committee elections were held. Nominations as put forth were voted on without objection. The 6<sup>th</sup> committee position was won by George Ready.

After the new EC was sworn in, there was a presentation on implementing a Breeders Trust Youth Scholarship program. The nuts & bolts of what is being proposed is that 10% of Breeders Trust monies will be set aside for scholarship. Any youth who wants to participate must be “nominated” for the same price as a foal. There will be no payouts in the first 4 years of the program while it builds up a base. Annual payouts will depend on how many kids are applying that qualify and how many points they have earned on a Breeders Trust eligible horse. At this point this program is just in the discussion phase and will ultimately be voted on by those participating in the Breeders Trust. So watch for more information on [apha.com](http://apha.com) and in the Journal.

Being that this was my first year and I am trying to determine what committee(s) I would like to be involved with, my intention was to bounce around to 2 or 3 of them. My first stop was General Show & Contest and I found myself really enjoying the topics of discussion so there I stayed!

The first item of discussion was the concern that non-APHA regional clubs are hosting APHA approved shows (normally a good thing) but that they are conflicting & drawing away from the shows put on by regional clubs (not a good thing). There was some discussion on things that could be done to try to protect our regional clubs – lots of ideas were thrown around but many of them would be really hard to police and control when the other entity is in compliance with the general rules (mileage requirements, dates, etc.). We all recognized that there is a problem but we don't quite know how to fix it. Ultimately we proposed that a non-regional club that is wishing to host an APHA approved show must give notice to the local regional club(s) and hopefully everyone can work together to try to promote both shows. We will ultimately have to continue to watch this and see if future things can be done to further protect our valuable regional clubs.

The next item for discussion related to the Categories for showing – Youth & Ammys are pointing out of novice in the Equitation category by virtue of the flat classes and therefore cannot show in the novice Over Fence classes. After discussion, the majority in the room felt that it should stay in the Equitation category and not be put into its own category.

Requiring shows to offer 13 & under and 14-18 Youth classes as well as Classic Amateur & Masters Amateur. (note – the new rule passed that show management can combine those age groups automatically if one age group is not a 2 point class). It was recommended that those decisions be left to show management as shows typically have a better idea if they will get more draw from a combined age group versus a split age group and will plan accordingly (everyone is about trying to attract the highest numbers). A required split is more of a burden on show management for awards cost, time management of the show, etc.

Allowing shows (like an open show or AQHA that is offering APHA classes) to dual approve classes. Basically the show would run Open Western Pleasure and the show secretary would sort out who was regular registry, who was solid bred, and who was another breed and then the class would be placed that way. Besides the fact that this puts a HUGE burden on show secretaries who don't need it, it was felt that this is in direct conflict with the APHA rules on not having SPB horses show in regular registry classes.

New Regional Club Sponsorship Program from the old Gelding Plus monies. Basically what is being proposed 30 sponsorships of \$1,000 will be allowed each year – 15 to Paint-O-Ramas and 15 to 1 or 2 judge shows. Zone shows will not be eligible. The committee discussed application criteria. A show will only be allowed to receive one sponsorship every 2 years. It was felt that Gold Star and Clubs of Distinction should receive some scoring points on the application as those clubs are already trying to go above & beyond. Other criteria would be how they are encouraging new show participation, membership recruitment (not just to the club but to APHA), creative show formats, things being done to enhance the exhibitor experience, what the money will be used for (special awards, etc.).

I really enjoyed this committee and hope that is where I'm ultimately assigned. After the General Show & Contest committee adjourned, I went to the Amateur meeting for the last few minutes where they were discussing ideas of things that have helped numbers around the nation (flat fees, promotions, awards, etc.).

The Presidential Inauguration Dinner was a lot of fun. Scot Jackson got very choked up about his inauguration and is very honored to serve this association. After dinner and all the speeches, we held the live auction of the theme baskets that the SWWPHC made up for several of us around the NW (for which I thank them – the baskets were GORGEOUS and far more creative than I would have come up with). \$4,000 was raised for the APH Foundation scholarship program. Great job guys!

The final day were the Standing Committee Reports – not knowing how that worked I made the mistake of trying to take notes on everyone's reports. But they all give a report very fast – so I missed a lot. I understand that APHA will eventually get all the committee standing reports on the website so if anyone wants more information they can find it (or I can try to get information for you). The highlights of what I wrote down:

**Amateur Committee** – they want Eq. Over Fences split out of the Equitation category and made it's own category. And they want more promo of the Walk/Trot classes.

**Breed Improvement** – they are not in favor of Performance Halter (this was apparently discussed a lot at Workshop and apparently will be discussed again). They discussed bullying (a huge issue that arose at the Youth world show) and recommend a sign be posted in the show office at every show. They also recommend that APHA support slaughter.

**General Show & Contest** (see my report above)

**Long Range Planning** – they would like to look into some changes in the EC format to allow for the President & President-elect to serve 2 year terms (to maybe actually get something done) and to add a tier that is not a line to the Presidency to allow people to come & go with their energy & expertise. They too recommend that APHA support humane horse slaughter.

**Membership Services** – they are looking at ways to bring back lapsed memberships and try to improve the membership experience. Separate from but within this committee is the Ombudsman program which is basically a mediation point / dispute resolution for members before a matter has to go the Executive Committee.

**Professional Horseman's Committee** – discussed P.R. on those who are members, discussed membership benefits and trying to establish a crisis fund

**Recreational Riding** – unfortunately they did not have a quorum to do any business. But they wanted it pointed out that at least 75% of APHA membership does not show and is not involved in the show world. So we really need to be conscientious of creating programs and membership experience for those people to keep them active. One idea is a Ready To Ride program designed to attract people who may not even have a horse.

**Regional Club Committee** – they too discussed how to protect regional club sponsored shows from outside entities. They are proposing a different application fee for non-regional clubs wishing to host a show. They also are proposing some changes to the PAC program – the horse owner as well as the exhibitor must be APHA members and charging shows a fee to become PAC approved (on the face of this I'm not in favor of but want to read & hear more information from that committee and from YOU before I weigh in). They are recommending that APHA work with the American Horse Council on the horse slaughter issue – perhaps APHA should devote part of the budget to deal with governmental issues. The issue of slaughter really should be a personal right to choose. And finally they discussed the new regional club sponsorship program.

**Rules Committee** – they too want to see Eq. Over Fences moved to its own category. They also feel that language regarding same sex marriage needs to be addressed in the ownership rules.

**Youth Committee** – they discussed the proposed Breeders Trust scholarship program. This committee is also in favor of moving the Eq. Over Fences to its own category. Discussion on the AQHA leveling program but feel that program is too new to have an opinion on. They feel that if a youth is training that that youth should not be eligible for novice youth status. They will have further discussion on novice youth status for someone who is maybe working off their lessons or board costs by banding horses for others, etc. Two new AjPHA clubs were approved and 2 open board positions were filled.

**Foundation** – they discussed ways to expand scholarship opportunities and streamline the application. What I found very interesting is that this program is currently supporting 46 youth scholarships.

Whew – it was a full and very interesting convention. Next up will be the Workshop where APHA will be kicking off their 50 year anniversary celebration year. Lots will be done regarding rule change proposals (if you have any that you want discussed, please remember they are due in to APHA by January 15, 2012 – let me know if you need a form to send in your proposal).

I welcome your input as your alternate director and I look forward to serving you!

Sincerely,  
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