

APHA Leadership Gathering 2026

I attended the 2026 APHA Leadership Gathering held at the Drover Hotel in Ft. Worth, Texas. The event began with the general membership meeting, where we heard updates on how the association performed over the past year. Attendance reports from 2025 showed a slight decline in show participation, but things seem to be leveling off, which is encouraging and could point toward a rebound soon. Kurt Crawford spoke about how some of the decline in registrations is because of more intentional breeding, and the lower World Show numbers can be attributed to the renovations going on at the Will Rogers arena in the summer of 2025. Paint racing paid out over \$3 Million and is a way to help diversify APHA's footprint. PBRIP (Paint Barrel Racing Incentive Program) paid out \$114,000, brought large numbers to the world show and is helping bring in new members that might not engage in other shows. Breeders Trust numbers are remaining stable. International members now make up 20% of membership! 1 in 3 registrations are international. Paynt Points paid out \$877,000. In 2026 an additional \$300,000 is earmarked for the color incentive bonus (for horses with 12 consecutive visible inches of white). APHA has a strong social media presence and it continues to grow. Horse IQ has 30,000 new visitors, with the reining course having the most engagement. APHA has launched a new international facebook page.

The afternoon session was a leadership workshop focused on developing strong leaders within the organization. Tina Shanahan led the session and shared helpful insights on leadership styles and the connection between horsemanship skills and leadership skills

On Saturday, committee meetings took place. I attended the Competition Advisory Committee, and we had productive discussions, especially around proposed changes to walk-trot rules. Since this division continues to grow, there was strong support for updates that would help it expand further. We also discussed adding non-pro/amateur and youth green horse pattern classes. We were able to revise wording of the proposal with the help of the rules committee and move it forward for voting.

In the afternoon, we attended the state directors meeting, where committees presented reports and reviewed rule changes being considered for a vote.

On Sunday, we continued with the second session of the state directors meeting. We reviewed all proposed rules, discussed key issues, and then voted on the incoming Board and NLDC.

For the NLDC, there were four candidates competing for two open positions. The winning candidates were Jennifer Barbee and Cindy Chilton-Moore.

For the Board of Directors election, six candidates were running for four available spots and each gave a speech prior to voting. The candidates that were voted in were Rachel Kooiker, Meredith Landy, Mark Resigner, and Adam Wainscott.

Dianne Alves delivered her closing remarks as her term as APHA President came to a close

After the voting concluded, all elected individuals were officially sworn in. Jaime Howard took the oath as President-Elect, followed by Mike Holloway being sworn in as the 2026 President.

The newly installed President then delivered his remarks, thanking his team and all APHA members, he encouraged all of us to try to attend just one more horse show this year.

