

# NETWORK

NEWS FOR THE AMHA MEMBERSHIP



OCTOBER 1998

Vol. VI, No. 10

## Update on Blue Ribbon Commission Report

by JESSE SMITH

Two years ago the AMHA Board appointed an independent commission to explore Morgan enthusiasts' opinions on ethics, integrity, unity, and sportsmanship. The Morgan Commission on Ethics, Integrity, Unity and Sportsmanship (aka the Blue Ribbon Commission) was set up as a totally autonomous body, with no AMHA Board or staff members. The Commission, in turn, established a network of commissioners throughout the regions to communicate with both members and non-members to collect feedback on the issues they were charged to explore. Several articles and requests for input were run in both AMHA and non-AMHA publications. Morgan enthusiasts were able to respond on the issues by calling commission members, in writing, and in focus group sessions.

Following an extensive effort "to collect individual thoughts and reactions," the Commission began the analysis process. Their objective was "to propose positive, impartial solutions to concerns of the Morgan Community dealing with matters of ethics, integrity, sportsmanship, unity, and other issues bearing on the future of the Morgan Breed." They submitted their report to the AMHA Board at the February 1998 Annual Convention.

Copies of the report were made available to all convention attendees.

The report contained three recommendations:

- That the AMHA Board of Directors review the issues and recommendations with a view to the timely address of at least two major problems.
- That the AMHA Board of Directors take strong, concerted, and planned action to change the climate of disappointment, disgruntlement, and apathy within the community.
- That the Morgan community—in all its elements—work together with commitment, consistent action, participation, and cooperation to ensure that the breed thrives, not merely survives.

The report also contained suggestions for "next steps" that should, or could be considered in addressing concerns expressed by the Morgan community. The Commission also submitted "timed phases" for meeting the report objectives:

Phase 1: Accomplish four "easy" items from the program timetable to achieve immediate credibility with the community.

Phase 2: Identify two major but achievable items from the next steps list for high profile categories on the opinion table; set


and keep action timetable

Phase 3: Comprehensively address at least one major category reflected on the opinion table in total with published results: set and keep action timetable.

Phase 1 was accomplished by June of 1998 and Phase 2 has been addressed and is being implemented. The AMHA Board will be addressing Phase 3 at its October 1998 meeting. The summary of the Commission's report along with the opinion tables were published in the April, 1998 issue of *Network*. To further address the next steps, a matrix has been produced to identify activities currently underway, goals and action items contained in AMHA's Strategic Plan that address the next steps, and activities that have already been accomplished. The matrix will provide the basis for the Board's discussions in October and is published beginning on page 21 in this issue. While there are a number of good suggestions contained in the report, it may not be possible or feasible to address them all, in the near term, due to resource constraints, and AMHA's lack of involvement in show activities, which fall more under AHSA, and/or show committee domain.

PAGE 1

### Inside This Issue

 Lippitt Club Celebration a Success

 Morgan Judges Employment and Recognition Program

 Calendar of Events

 1999 AMHA Convention

 Shadow Hawk

 Reschooling the Saddle Seat Horse for Dressage

 Dry Weather Management

 Training Clinics at Equine Affaire

*The Morgan Commission on Ethics, Integrity, Unity and Sportsmanship  
(aka the Blue Ribbon Commission): Status Report Regarding Their Recommendations  
(as of September 1998)*

SUGGESTED "NEXT STEPS"	IN-PROCESS	STRATEGIC PLAN	COMPLETED
<b>Trainers</b> <b>A. Trainers as Judges</b> 1. Comment suggested that all trainers be removed as judges at Morgan shows (supported by the fact that several Morgan trainers are not judges); the suggestion arises as an attempt to eliminate the political arena, payback, retaliation, favoritism climate which is perceived to be prevalent	Judges Training Program, at AMHA Annual Convention Revision of Judges Educational Program approved by Board/Committee Implementation of Judges Educational Program approved by Board Judges Employment and Recognition Program, reference providers program, approved for implementation	Objective D: ... improve and support the "show" environment Goals D-4: job descriptions etc. D-5: ethical standards D-6: training of judges	Board has approved all recommendations from Judges Standards Committee for a revised Judges Educational Program, and Judges Employment and Recognition (reference providers) Program
2. Suggestions to define and make absolute the Morgan Horse Judging Standards [hereafter referred to as Standards, aka breed standard], changing them to Rules, to increase the show Morgans' adherence to those standards and rules	By year 2000 all regional shows be required to participate with the Judges Employment and Recognition Program	Objective D: ... support the "show" environment ... Goals D-1: enforcement of Standards D-2: educate on Standards	—
3. The creation of a mediation panel accessible to the Morgan community in entirety for grievance was a frequent remark; such panel should carry authority to sanction offenders, particularly errant judges who disregard the Standards	Formation of a Judges Review Board	—	Board approved motion for a Judges Review Board at August '98 meeting
<b>B. Trainer practices</b> 1. Arm such panel or review committee with definitions of unethical practice, inhumane treatment, inappropriate financial gouging, shady practices, etc.	Charge and operational procedures will need to be developed for Judges Review Board	—	—
<b>Membership Support</b> 1. The Board must make strong, publicized initiative to address breed needs as expressed by the community or it will be guilty by definition of the charge of inaction, ignorance of fact and expressed need, and disenfranchisement of the membership	Complete reorganization of all committees/task groups to involve more members as cochairs and participants Publish these updates as a matrix in the <i>Network</i>	Strategic Plan stresses promotion of the breed	Morgan Commission on Ethics, Integrity, Unity and Sportsmanship (MCoEIUS), and their report, now functioning as Blue-Ribbon Commission (BRC) Task Group
2. Some sort of committee, panel or authoritative body should be available for members to address grievances; such panel's actions would be upheld by the Standards and/or a code of ethics or breed standard as set forth by the AMHA Board as representative of the needs of the breed	All Committees represent members and provide path to Board for member input Board of Directors are also an avenue for member input Breed Standards Task Group appointed Co-Chairs: Nancy Eidam, Jeanne Mellin Herrick Formation of a Judges Review Board	—	Committee structure revised to provide more member input and control

SUGGESTED "NEXT STEPS"	IN-PROCESS	STRATEGIC PLAN	COMPLETED
3. Standards require status as firm benchmark for Morgan type and conformation as a guide and protection for both breeder/owner and to protect the breed from becoming unrecognizable and disaffected by those individuals whose aim is to cause the Morgan horse to be blended with and illustrative of other breeds	Standards Committee has been charged to completely review/enhance Standards and reconcile with AHSA Rules Recommendations of Judges Standards Committee now being implemented	—	Board approved an expanded program for judges training, Judges Educational Program, Judges Employment and Recognition Program, and Judges Review Board
4. Representation of all disciplines, information about all aspects of training and ownership, feature of Morgan farms, horses and individuals large and small, should be available via our breed magazine	New Committee/Task Group structure is designed around interest and diversity of members and breed Monthly feature: "Road Trip" to cover specific farms, people, events, etc. within a locale	Strategic Plan stresses all members regardless of interest, discipline, etc. Objective B: ... increase market share ... Goal B-2: comprehensive database on the breed	TMH editorial has been adjusted to showcase diversity of breed Network redesigned to stress more information, education, and value to members
5. Owner/member packets should aptly describe all elements of the breed, participation in various groups, comprehensive listing of educational and guideline material available upon request	Additional literature (How To booklets) to answer specific questions, i.e., how to buy, train, show etc. New-member packet for July 98 Owner/Amateur Task Group	Objective B: ... increase market share ... Action Items B-3.1: promo/marketing support B-3.3: breeder support program B-3.5: active, value-added AMHA website C-4.1: AMHA offerings C-4.2: new member packet Goal C-5: provide "how to" series	New brochure produced to promote the Morgan horse to non-Morgan people
6. AMHA headquarters (HQ) should function as a service organization to the breed	Additional affinity programs Expanded AMHA gift selection items	Primary role of HQ in Strategic Plan	Staff reorganized to be more responsive to member needs
7. It is imperative that the AMHA Board establish stronger credibility with the membership, perceived and real, such that the membership feels represented and taken into account	—	Major emphasis of Strategic Plan Objective B: ... increase market share... Action Items B-1.3: ... increase public knowledge ... B-1.4: ... Morgan user support program B-1.5: ... develop/expand ... using and enjoying Morgans Objective C: develop member base and "value-added" Goals C-3: ... strategic partnership ... with clubs C-4: ... evaluate satisfaction with AMHA	New committee structure design for this purpose MCoEIU&S Report and BRC Task Group Expanded representation of members on committees Co-chairmanship of all special committees and task groups
8. Expenses attendant to membership, registrations, futurities, stallion service, sweepstakes, etc. should appear on a composite list for the reference of members	—	New accounting system Objective C: develop member base and "value-added" Action Item C-4.3: ... annual report of benefits and AMHA performance	Annual financial statements are published in the Network
9. Breeding handbook with guidelines, expense and reasonable practice parameters should be made available	Breeders Committee collection of articles and practices/tips to be included in a breeders handbook (now in development)	Objectives B: ... increase market share ... Goal B-1: image of the Morgan horse Action Items B-2.3: database of breeders and trainers B-3.1: promotional/marketing support for breeders and owners B-3.3: create a "breeder incentive" program	—

SUGGESTED "NEXT STEPS"	IN-PROCESS	STRATEGIC PLAN	COMPLETED
<b>Leadership and Balance of Power</b> 1. Start running AMHA like a business: Board should not be involved in day-to-day management, but should set policy and direction only	Program budget developed 1998 Revision of Directors Handbook	Objective B: ... increase market share ... Action Item B-1.1: reexamine breed profile Objective F: ... AMHA as a viable business entity	Developed three-year Strategic Plan Board Retreat in 1997 clarified roles/responsibilities Board and Staff personality (Kolbe) profiles Program/project accounting system
2. Empower upper management to effect policy decisions without Board involvement as to how, why, when, etc.	On-going working relationship between Board and Staff	Objective F: ... AMHA as a viable business entity	Board and Staff restructured for this purpose
3. Breed needs to have one image with a central contact point, not segmented between AMHA, AMHI, NMMH, GN&WCMHS, etc. (see Breed Growth and Promotion)	New logo under development AMHA/AMHI joint meeting 8/98 Joint task group appointed to explore improved communications and cooperation	Part of Strategic Plan emphasis	Development of "corporate" identity and logo Promotion of breed in other publications
4. Election process of Directors to Board needs ethics guidelines to prevent inappropriate tactics and unfairness; what should and should not be done, ergo what is required of a candidate and how a campaign should be run	Bylaws are currently being rewritten	—	Guidelines and procedures approved at Feb. 1998 Board meeting
5. AMHA HQ should be in greater contact with and have a more proactive relationship with regional clubs and membership	A senior staff member will be scheduled to attend each Regional Morgan show Strategic partnership program being implemented	Objective C: ... develop member base and "value-added" Goal C-3: ... "strategic partnership" with clubs	—
6. AMHA Staff should monitor projects as assigned by the Board from initiation through progress to closure (action lists, evaluation, deadlines) and be held reportable to the Board on those issues which, in turn, impacts Board credibility	1998 Action Plan flows out of the Strategic Plan and into each staff member's individual objectives	Emphasis of Strategic Plan	Staff action plans developed Program/project budget 1998
7. AMHA Board should be open to representatives of all disciplines and financial strata; in the case of required assistance, a reserve fund could be available, monitored and adjudicated by a special committee bound to confidentiality	Elections open to all members (based on nomination petitions)	—	Election process was revised in 1998 to make it easier for members to run for positions on the Board
8. AMHA Board should publish its course and determined breed direction to the membership with specific remarks about those issues and initiatives in line with grass roots needs; this requires AMHA Board to be cognizant of and committed to addressing those needs	Board committees are continuously seeking member input	Strategic Plan sets a three year timeline/course for AMHA	Strategic Plan has been distributed to attendees at the 1998 Convention in February, synopsis and reports published in the <i>Network</i> , copies of document available from AMHA upon request

SUGGESTED "NEXT STEPS"	IN-PROCESS	STRATEGIC PLAN	COMPLETED
<p><b>Breeding Practices</b></p> <p>1. Many people have experienced untold degrees of unfairness as a result of inappropriate conditions in breeding contract which they were advised by the breeder was necessary and normal; admittedly, there exists a level of ignorance and unfamiliarity with new entries to the breed, but it is a sad representation of the breed that so many have received ill and unethical treatment by its "foundation group"—the breeder [see Membership Support]</p>	<p>A breeders' handbook is currently under development [Breeders' Resource] Board approved that a series of "how to" materials be developed</p>	<p>Objective B: ... increase market share ... Action Items B-1.4: Morgan user support program B-2.3: database of breeders and trainers B-3.1: promotional/marketing support for breeders and owners</p>	<p>AMHA has gone on record to promote and protect the breed</p>
<p>2. The flip side of the coin reveals the breeders' need for some level of control over breeding practices outside the breeding farm: conditions for vetting; semen shipment in timely fashion; service reports; regulated "boilerplate" contracts; horse shows and semen shipments; mares in foal, support guidelines and breeder packets, etc.</p>	<p>Breeders' handbook in development</p>	<p>Objective B: ... increase market share ... Action Item B-2.3: database of breeders and trainers Goal B-3: continuously promote the breed</p>	<p>—</p>
<p><b>Judging Practices vs. Judging Standards vs. Type/Conformation vs. Enforceability</b></p> <p>1. Readjust viewpoint and deal with need to address the disregard of the Standards revealed by current trends in judging and breeding</p>	<p>Judging/Shows Task Group in place Judges Education Program Judges Employment and Recognition Program Judges Review Board</p>	<p>Objective D: Continuously improve and support the "show" environment for Morgan horses and enthusiasts</p>	<p>—</p>
<p>2. Option: Consider appointing an unbiased scribe for In-Hand classes to assist in justifying judges' scorecard against Standards for 1st and 2nd places—educational explanation could stifle criticism</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>
<p>3. Option: Have a vet check prior to entry into class to guarantee the integrity of the In-Hand mare and stallion; vets should be able to judge correct conformation</p>	<p>AHSA drug testing program</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>
<p>4. Option: Hold prescheduled judging seminars (e.g., identify a minimum of one class per show, said class/discipline to differ at each show) for judge to make statement in a positive, educational way as to why a horse was pinned, etc.; use Standards as a support and guide)</p>	<p>Judging videos in production Judges Standard Committee has recommended revisions to the Judges Educational Program</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>Judging seminar revised and new videos developed</p>

SUGGESTED "NEXT STEPS"	IN-PROCESS	STRATEGIC PLAN	COMPLETED
5. Revitalize Judges Review Board	Implementation underway	—	Board approved motion at August '98 meeting
6. Maintain a record and/or profile on judges to provide balance and feedback in judging practices, the recurrence of the trend to judge contrary to the Standards highlighted by the Judges Committee Report, raised at the Judging Seminar, referred to the Judges Review Board, and publicized to the people; such procedure would provide for full disclosure, remedial work at seminars for the judge whose trends are questionable or not in adherence to the Standards, and be educative to the community and the public	AMHA is running a series of articles in the <i>Network</i> on the Standards and AHSA rules to better educate people Currently looking into how AMHA can offer Judges training at more than one location per year Standards Committee is currently doing a complete review of the Standards to remove rules and make sure they are truly guidelines; also looking into how they can be enforced Judges Employment and Recognition Program approved for implementation	All content within Objective D addresses this concern	Rules Committee continuously examines the rules and holds Rules Forums to allow input prior to changes being sent to AHSA
<b>Breed Growth and Promotion</b> 1. Create a stronger breed presence and AMHA representation at local shows	AMHA has expanded show coverage from 34 to 52 shows for 1998 season; e.g., will have a staff rep at each Regional show in 1999	—	For 1998 AMHA has retained the services of Morgan people to cover shows from a magazine sales perspective ( <i>TMH</i> Ad Reps)
2. Advertise Morgan horse in non-breed publications (aka breed promo)	Full schedule of Morgan ads set for other equine publications	Action Item B-3.2: advertise ... the Morgan breed to the general public ...	New series of ads have been developed and are running in all major equine publications
3. Encourage participation in all-breed events and demonstrations	Budget has been set aside to support local clubs to participate in breed events on behalf of the Morgan	Objectives B: ... increase market share Action Items B-3.2: advertise ... the Morgan breed ... B-3.3: create a "breeder support" program ... B-3.4: ... public relations program ...	Have participated in all three Equitana events and last three Equine Affairs plus Texas Fair
4. Liaise with other breeds to find out how they solved problems	—	Objective C: ... develop member base and "value-added" Action Item C-1.4: ... [info] on other breed organizations ... benefits they provide ...	Attended the Equine Breed Round Table at AHC Convention Participate in HIA (Horse Industry Alliance)
5. Improve public relations within the Morgan community and relationships with other breed organizations	Designated Staff person to PR, Staff presence at Regional and other A shows Increased dissemination of press releases	Objective B: ... increase market share Action Item B-3.4: ... PR program	Increased dissemination of press releases Morgan participation at KY Horse Park, Horses in the Hood, and U.S. Army
6. Understand that a clear image and strongly upheld Standards equals price and identification; there's nothing wrong with true Morgan type—typey Morgans can compete with other breeds without being changed	<i>TMH</i> magazine emphasizes diversity of the Morgan breed	Objective B stresses the diversity of the Morgan horse and its ability to compete with all breeds	New breed promo color brochure available
7. Stop "muddying" the breed standard (within Standards)	Standards Committee reviewing the existing Standards	Objective D: ... improve and support "show" environment	—