

**NFHR BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERSHIP  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday July 1, 2021  
Via Zoom and Facebook Live**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – Rory at 6:00pm mountain time.

**ROLL CALL** – Present Rory, Karl, Jessica, Laura, Curtis, Jim, Kelly, Jennifer. Absent Sarah. Staff present, Jeanne, and Nancy. Members who presented questions in advance Wendy Luscombe, Ardeth Obenauf. Invited but absent Gretchen Payne and Margaret Bogie.

**PRESIDENT’S INTRODUCTION:** Welcome and meeting parameters.

**REGISTRAR’S INSTRUCTIONS:** Zoom and Facebook logistics.

**QUESTIONS PRESENTED IN ADVANCE BY WENDY LUSCOMBE:**

- 1) Where in the Rules of Registration is the exception that cross bred stallions not owned by the applicant at the time of the cross breeding are exempt from the crossbreeding ban?
- 2) Where in the Rules of Registration is the exception that cross bred stallions are exempt from the crossbreeding ban if their cross breeding was done in a country that approves cross breeding?
- 3) Why was there such a rush on behalf of the board to reverse the appeal and approve this particular stallion, even against the Registry’s own Bylaws (sic Rules of Registration)?
- 4) Is the Board planning to approve other cross breeding stallions?

Answers to the Questions above:

The Rules of Registration contain 18 words that directly reference crossbreeding and the intent of the rule. The rule has only been invoked one time prior to a recent instance with a domestically bred and raised stallion in 2012. The rule has never been reviewed regarding an imported stallion, or a stallion with crossbred offspring in a country where that is permitted according to their registries. The rule is very general and did not specify exceptions, which is why it is the board’s intent to review the rule and clarify it with the assistance of the membership. It is important to review the rule, examine its intent in the context in which it was written when the registry was founded, and determine the needs of the registry today to protect the Norwegian Fjord Horse in the United States and the NFHR registered Canadian horses. DNA testing to prove parentage was not available at that time. Because of the brevity of the rule prohibiting crossbreeding, important issues are not addressed such as breeding NFHR registered fjords to unregistered fjords. This is not technically crossbreeding, as the horses are both supposedly of the same breed, but this is a situation that should be clarified so that the rules are not as open to misunderstanding.

Also included in Article 1 D of the Rules of Registration is the statement of our mission: Protecting the genetic purity and the highest standards of the Norwegian Fjord Horse. The stallion that spurred this question is 100% genetically a Norwegian Fjord Horse, as much as any in our pedigree database. The stallion has also been approved for breeding in two different European countries. This is one of the factors that had to be considered against the prior owner’s actions in Europe.

Bringing new genetics to North America is consistent with our mission, and a stallion that met the criteria for approval in two countries was a consideration. This is not an endorsement of the stallion by the NFHR, nor should it be construed as a recommendation to breed to the stallion.

The registration denial and the appeal submission and ultimate approval was not a short process. There was not any particular rush to a decision, nor was the decision easy or unanimous. Many different opinions were represented, and the

vote was ultimately to register the stallion, but to clarify the Rules of Registration for the future, and to reinforce to the appellant that the horse should not be crossbred in the US.

Currently there are no other fjord horses, stallions, or mares, under consideration for registration with a documented history of crossbreeding. Clarifying the rule at our Face-to-Face meeting in January will help ensure a more uniform interpretation of the rule should it be needed.

#### **QUESTIONS PRESENTED IN ADVANCE BY MARGARET BOGIE:**

1) I have heard from BOD members that accidental crossbreeding from poor fencing or poor stallion management is allowed. Nothing would happen to the breeding stallion or the owner. Is this correct or just an opinion?

Answer: This is another ambiguous situation where it's possible the rule should be amended or clarified. While accidents may happen, this situation has not been brought before the NFHR so there is no precedent. An appeal of a one-time situation might be warranted. The rule as written makes no room for exceptions except through the appeal process.

2&3) What is the complaint process for a registered Fjord being used in crossbreeding? What is the adjudication process for a complaint about a member crossbreeding?

Answer: There is no formal complaint process at this time. The NFHR does not involve itself in conflicts between members, so the recommendation would be to document the facts of the case in a letter to the board and to provide evidence. Without evidence, there is no way to act. If a member alleges crossbreeding and provides evidence, the issue would be brought before the Board of Directors. If there was sufficient proof, the horse could have its registration revoked, the membership of the owner could be suspended. This could impact any other registrations or transfers by the suspended member.

4) What steps does the NFHR take to educate members about the reasons crossbreeding is undesirable?

Answer: This is a topic that could benefit from additional education. There are two committees that could collaborate on these efforts – the Education Committee and the Breeders Committee. It has not been broadly discussed in the past because it is a rule that could benefit from additional clarity, and it has not been brought into question since 2012.

5) Are there members of the BOD who have crossbred their Fjords? If some allowable form of cross breeding had occurred, should it not be disclosed to the membership?

Answer: There are no members of the board of directors who have had any evidence provided regarding any Fjord that they own or have obtained an exception for crossbreeding their fjords.

#### **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE BY GRETCHEN PAYNE:**

1) When will the names of people who submitted their application/information for BOD positions be posted and made available for membership vote?

Answer: August 1<sup>st</sup> the nomination will open, Sept 1<sup>ST</sup> nominations close, Oct 1<sup>ST</sup> ballots will be sent out. November 1<sup>5th</sup> is the deadline for return and Dec 1<sup>st</sup> is when the results are posted.

2) When will members be notified that they've been added to the committee they've requested to join?

Answer: Inquiring members should have heard back from the committee chairman at this time. If you have requested to be on a committee and you have not heard back, please feel free to reach out again. Traditionally, the chair of the committee brings people forward at the Face-to-Face meeting to join their assigned committee. Each chairman is encouraged to limit the number of people on a committee. There are other considerations in adding people to a committee such as diversity in geographical location and interests.

#### **QUESTION SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE BY ARDETH OBENAUF:**

1) With all the information that has been circulated regarding the recent controversy, whether accurate or not, many members are unhappy with the current leadership. How can the Board of Directors regain the confidence of the NFHR members, display transparency in their decisions and prevent any similar situations going forward?

Answer: This general meeting is a step in the right direction. This Board hopes to have an open and healthy dialogue with its membership. We have also extended invitations to members to come to Board meetings. Our next meeting is on July 13<sup>th</sup> and we invite the interested membership to attend.

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN THE COMMENTS THREAD ON FACEBOOK LIVE OR CLARIFIED BY THE BOARD:**

1) There were many questions regarding cross breeding. Answer: Many questions have been answered above. Many questions were hypothetical and cannot be answered.

3) There were many comments that were not questions. Answer: Those can be seen on the NFHR Facebook Group as well as the entire meeting on saved video on the same Group.

2) Is the Executive Director a contract employee and what are their duties? Answer: Yes, the Executive Director is a contract employee, and their duties are outlined in the Bylaws which are posted on the NFHR website.

3) Will there be an evaluation this year? Answer: Yes, there is an evaluation tentatively scheduled at the International Agri Center in Tulare, CA for October 30-31, 2021. Final approval will be based on the number of horses entered and the budget as of August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

4) What is the purpose of the face-to-face meeting and the discussion of the crossbreeding rule? Answer: The Board is required to meet once a year in person (except for this year it was via Zoom due to COVID-19). The intention of bringing the discussion of this rule to the face-to-face meeting is to give it the attention it deserves to examine why the rule is written as it is and if there should be changes to either clarify it or modify it. Currently there are issues unaddressed by the current wording and the board has solicited opinions from the members in a posted letter date June 1, 2021, on Facebook and the NFHR website on what changes they feel are important. The rules of registration require membership input. The best way to make sure your voice is heard is to write a letter to the board including as much factual information supporting your position. At the moment there seems to be little appetite to abolish the crossbreeding rule, so it needs clarification to ensure it is applied consistently in the future.

Meeting adjourned 7:15 mountain time