

# 2014 AHA Convention Report

By Chelsea Wesson

Delegate from ARAB Inc., Region 11

I would like to thank the members of ARAB, Inc. for giving me the opportunity to be a delegate at the 2014 AHA Convention in Denver, CO. I was able to attend with our club president, Laurie Kern, and our club had two great alternates in Marilyn Norton & Marilyn Weber (acting AHA Dressage Committee Chair). We were very well represented as a club in the convention!

On Thursday morning, the first General Session kicked off. My first note to everyone is a very timely point. USEF Memberships expire at the end of November each year. When renewing for 2015, please make sure you list Arabian/Half-Arabian as your Primary breed/discipline! It truly does make a difference for AHA and everyone competing with this wonderful breed. The association has stats to show that many do not mark Arabian as their primary, and it would be beneficial to us all to change that.

On the first morning, only 249 delegates out of a possible 428 had been credentialed. By Friday, this number did go up to 268. I heard a good amount of discussion on delegate numbers. It is sad to me that we have that many possible representatives there, and then that many do not attend for whatever reasons. This is our association, and we need to make sure our very best representatives attend convention every year!

AHA President Cynthia Richardson gave a wonderful speech. I really hope that this speech becomes available on the AHA website. I cannot do it justice by summarizing it, but I do recommend that everyone listen to it.

One of the big points relating to delegates was the possibility of changing the numbers for clubs to be able to send more delegates. As a club, you must have over 50 members to be able to send a second delegate. I heard a couple of interesting ideas. One was to lower that number to 35. Another was to automatically start out with two delegates per club. It is interesting to think about for the future. If we have more possible delegates, will we have more there? Or will we still have a large number of possible delegates not in attendance?

Also in that first General Session was the possibility of club revocation. A total of twelve clubs were up to be revoked. It was asked to postpone the vote until Saturday as many clubs were close to the minimum number. Many of the clubs are also known for hosting shows in their regions. The motion passed. On Saturday, only four clubs were revoked. The rest all remain active AHA clubs.

There was no competition for the AHA Officers. The President (Cynthia Richardson), Vice President (Nancy Harvey), Treasurer (Bob Nash), and Secretary (Jan Decker) all retain their positions.

After the first session, I went to the combined meeting of the Professional Horsemen's Committee and the Q&A with Stan Morey, Judges & Steward Commissioner. There was a good amount of discussion in the PHC about Youth Nationals and the number of horses that become ill there. Someone had suggested prior to the meeting that a limit on classes entered be put into place, and this was the main speaking point. The majority opinion was that the exhibitors need to use common sense when entering and to make sure that each horse is physically prepared for the event.

Shoeing also came up for discussion. Stan Morey stated that he still did not have any definitive answers to shoe weights and their effects on horses. The offices are still working on the issue, but as of now they did not have anything to present. There was some discussion on the quality (or lack thereof) of footing at shows and how that can affect our show horses.

Mr. Morey mentioned that with over 300 AHA shows in 2014, his office received only two complaints. He received sixty to sixty-five judge evaluation forms. Of those, only approximately twenty were negative. The doom and gloom we all read about online and hear as gossip has by no means translated to AHA's proper offices.

One thread of discussion that wove its way throughout the convention was the topic of the new Levels. As many of you will know, I was actively involved in the early stages of the creation of that resolution. There were a number of questions in nearly every committee meeting I attended. The big question was from local shows wondering how to incorporate the classes into their schedules. Jim Hitt, the proponent of the resolution in 2013, released charts and an info sheet with suggestions on Friday. I tried to answer questions as best as I could when they came up, but I am hopeful that his sheet helped many.

I attended the Canadian Nationals Show Commission Meeting on Thursday afternoon. This is my favorite show every year, so I wanted to hear what is being worked on for the future. The show is committed to Brandon, MB through 2016. The facility is working on remodeling the top warmup arena and the stabling area near it. This will hopefully be completed by 2015. There is hope that a new building will be funded soon, too. This would possibly hold an indoor work arena and more stabling. The footing quality in the outdoor arena was a point of discussion, and the commission will pursue improving that for 2015. Once again, there will be a \$5,000 sponsorship to the largest amateur class of the show. There is a possibility that it would be expanded. As someone who benefited from that sponsorship in 2014, I love the idea and hope that it grows! The dates for 2015 are August 17<sup>th</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The Region 11 caucus was held on Thursday night. I would like to thank the Region for providing us with a great meal! It was much appreciated after a long day of meetings.

The main discussion in the caucus, as expected, was about the Region 11 Sport Horse Championships. A Sport Horse Committee is being established to advise everyone in the region. I will keep our club members updated on this as more information becomes available. We do not have enough information to say anything for certain at this time. As it stands, the Illinois/ARAB, Inc. Show will remain hosts of the Region 11 Off Site Dressage/Sport Horse/Western Dressage championships as long as the show commission wants it. All four of our club representatives in the caucus felt that the region has no intent to take them away from us, which was reassuring.

Moving onto Friday, I'll run through some numbers from the 2014 National events.

For Youth Nationals, 843 horses were entered with 521 exhibitors. For the first time, the AHYA Convention was open to everyone. They had 180 attendees, which was up from the previous year. It was also stated that they are accepting bids to host Youth Nationals for 2016 and beyond.

There were 696 horses at Canadian Nationals.

Sport Horse Nationals will be in Raleigh, NC for 2015, 2017 & 2019. They had 370 horses at their show in 2014.

US Nationals had 1,795 horses this year. Of those, 1,033 were purebreds and 752 were half-Arabians. They are guaranteeing open schooling in the Pavilion for halter horses earlier in the show, and it sounded like they are looking into new scoring software.

In 2014, there were 346 AHA shows, 85 one day shows, 183 distance rides, and 188 races.

Glenn Petty, who was presenting all of these statistics, had great charts shown while speaking. I took cell phone photos of these. They are not the best quality, of course, but they are better than nothing! I shared them immediately on Facebook, and they have since been shared on a variety of places. Mr. Petty also said that registrations are up by 9% from this time in 2013. I'll include small images of these photos at the end of the report. The full size images are available on the ARAB, Inc. Facebook page.

Russ Taylor gave an upbeat speech about the Sweepstakes Program. His main point is that the program is completely solvent! It contributed over \$200,000 to AHA. He stated that the in-utero nomination is one way a breeder makes a commitment to every foal they breed before it's even born.

Sweepstakes is returning to the yearling classes being Sweepstakes only in 2016. Be sure to have your in-utero foals nominated now so that they will be eligible to compete in those classes in 2016!

A change to the program is that purebred foals no longer have to be by a nominated sire. They may instead be out of a Sweepstakes nominated purebred mare. This will allow for foals being sired by foreign or newly imported stallions to be eligible for Sweepstakes classes.

Mr. Taylor also wanted to remind everyone that AHA is our organization and serves as an umbrella over all of us. That is a point that, in my opinion, can never be made enough.

As a club, we should be proud that our president, Laurie Kern, was one of two recipients for the AHA Region 11 Volunteer of the Year Award! Gary Paine was the other.

Perhaps the shocker of the entire convention was the speed at which we flew through the resolutions. Resolutions 1, 3, 4, 27, 27 & 28 were all withdrawn. Resolution 9 was defeated. The remaining resolutions were all approved with very little discussion on the floor.

Saturday was another great day for speakers. Scott Trees kicked it off with a great presentation. Two separate video clips were shown during it, and I really hope these make their way to online sources. They both would be really lovely marketing tools for the Arabian breed.

Marketing gave a presentation about their new saying – "Life looks different with an Arabian horse." They emphasized the importance of outreach programs, and each region was challenged to have at least one outreach program each year. Each AHA member has been challenged to do some sort of outreach each week. This could be as simple as a post on Facebook describing one thing you love about the Arabian horse, or it could be something as big as an open house. I challenge our club members to participate!

The new website was presented to everyone. It really is beautiful and looks to be extremely user friendly! I have shared pictures of it on the ARAB, Inc. Facebook page and included a couple of those photos at the end of this report. It will be out in mid 2015, though I wish it was sooner! This will be a great marketing tool for all us of involved with the Arabian horse.

Mary Trowbridge gave a moving presentation on the Arabian Horsemen's Distress Fund. It is truly amazing what she and everyone else involved in the AHDF have been able to accomplish since its creation. After her presentation, donations were given on the floor. Over \$21,000 was raised. It was

announced that evening at the President's Banquet that an anonymous donor would be doubling that, making it \$42,000 raised at convention for the AHDF.

It was announced by convention planning that they will be looking for host locations for the convention for 2017 and beyond. The convention will be in Denver again for 2015 and 2016.

All in all, I had a great time. There are some really great people involved in this association. I was happy to be part of that this year. I came home with a lot of new knowledge and the desire to learn more. If anyone has any questions about what I have said here or anything else about convention, please feel free to contact me.

If any other ARAB, Inc. members that were at convention would like to contribute on their experiences, I would greatly appreciate it! I know that we did not all attend the same meetings.





