THE AUSTRALIAN FLYBALL ASSOCIATION INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 17th October 2020

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

What a strange year it has been. If the drought and bushfires in 2019 weren’t enough, the COVID crisis in 2020 has brought many community activities and sports to a virtual standstill across the country and Flyball is no exception. Limited activities such as club training are possible in some states and territories but racing events are, by and large, suspended over a wide area. Like the rest of the country, we look forward to a vaccine that will allow us to go back to some sort of normal.

A significant casualty of the pandemic was the 2020 National Flyball Championships, which were at first postponed but eventually had to be cancelled. A great disappointment to everyone who looked forward to them, and to the host clubs whose planning efforts came to nothing. Let’s hope that the 2021 Nationals planned for Canberra next October will be able to go ahead.

**Highlights**:

We made a major investment in safety during the year by purchasing Defibrillator kits for Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland. Given the numbers of Race Meetings held in SA and Tasmania and the capital cost of the kits, the Committee decided that it was more cost effective to hire on an as-needs basis for those States.

Members were granted free membership for the 2020/21 financial year in recognition of the massive disruption to racing in 2020. This involved the Association forgoing approximately $18,000 in income. The only income to the Association recently has been for Title Certificates, Additional Dogs, Club Renewals, New Members and additional Associate Members.

A major effort is underway to re-write the Rules and Policies of the AFA. It has long been recognized that the Rules needed significant work, they suffered from many years of piecemeal updates and adjustments, but until recently we did not have the right person to undertake the work. That person has now arrived in the form of Paul Newman, who, with his legal background, is making excellent progress.

Compared with last year, our number of full Financial Members is steady while the numbers of Associate Members and Racing Dogs have risen. It’s also very encouraging to report that we have five Judges at Provisional level, a very significant increase in our Judging strength. However, the number of clubs has reduced slightly.

Further development work has been done on the Ulna measurement device to overcome teething problems that came to light during the first few months of real-world operation. We are now confident that we have a sound design, but the break in racing means that we have to wait until full activity resumes to be sure.

And on a happy note, I’m pleased to report that the first ever Race Meeting “Out of the Wilderness” was held in Tasmania at Pontville, near Hobart, in November 2019. Congratulations to David Strong and the organizing committee of the Tassie Flying Paws on a very well planned and run event, which included four Tasmanian teams and two teams made up from interstate clubs. It was a pleasure to be the AFA Representative and a Timekeeper at this memorable event. Let’s hope it’s the first of many.

**Subcommittees:**

Development and Promotions Subcommittee

The Development Sub Committee has devoted most of its efforts to developing a new landing page for the AFA website. Our objectives started off many and varied, eventually settling on targeting significantly increased traffic on the landing page by regularly publishing news stories from local, National and International events. Anticipated benefits include:

Introduction over time of targeted advertising is intended to generate passive income for benefit of all AFA members.

Provide a billboard to attract a naming rights sponsor for the State and Territory Premierships.

We are currently negotiating a release date for the new Landing Page.

In addition to a number of AFA committee members who had input, the Development Sub Committee would in particular like to thank Connie Blackmore for drafting the original example of the landing page which really brought the project to life.

Also, the AFA committee has appointed Jodie O’Brien (accomplished news reporter for the Courier Mail) as Chief News Editor and Ben Royes as Deputy News Editor.

The Rules Subcommittee

Rewriting of the AFA Rules and Policies by AFA Judge Paul Newman. Anyone who regularly uses the Rules will understand how major a project this is, which we anticipate will be completed in 2021.

Reviewed and re-drafted the progression pathway from Steward to Judge for clarity to assist Members who are interested in becoming AFA Judges.

Implemented the Member Motion approved at the 2019 AGM to contact affected teams when race meetings are cancelled just prior to start when teams may be travelling.

Developed a consistent set of rules to permit a specific division to be handicapped when the seed time spread within the division is too wide for competitive racing. The rules prohibit single team and combined divisions, which are not necessary when handicap is an option.

Proposed and had approved amendments to improve clarity and eliminate inconsistencies in rules on Training in the Ring, calculating Division Splits, approving mixed format Race Meetings, and duties of the AFA Representative.

Web Team

The Web Team were, not surprisingly given the year we’re in, very quiet, but always looking to improve the points and results system for Competition Secretaries, whilst providing training assistance where necessary in all fields.

The Web Team are working in conjunction with NSW Rep Frank Lux, in developing a QR code system for tracking the vital and valuable AFA Lights and associated Race Meeting equipment as it is handed off from club to club. The system, which will work similarly to a COVID contact tracking system, is currently being tested and we hope it can be introduced in all States shortly. Information that is generated when clubs transfer equipment for the next race meeting will be stored in the AFA Database and will allow us to view where each piece of equipment is at any time.

This is a very simple system to use, just a quick photo of the QR Code on a smartphone as equipment is transferred from one club to the next and it opens a checklist for the receiving club to complete.

The electronic workbook that was foreshadowed at last year’s AGM is online and being used

The timesheet generation that was also foreshadowed at last year’s AGM was put on hold, mainly because of a system developed by Frank Lux that was close to completion. This system is offered to every Competition Secretary to use with Frank available on phone to assist if necessary. Integration with the AFA Database was considered, but is not currently planned due to the time and cost to implement it.

Digital membership cards are up and running

Treasurer:

We implemented new accounting system QBO this year, which has been fantastic, and a time saver for end of month accounting and reporting. The system prepares much more detailed reports for the National Committee and members.

For the next financial year, we intend to investigate an electronic payments system such as Pay Pal to simplify payments by members. Our new accounting system supports this option with the bank feeds coming directly into the accounting system with a press of the button.

Dog Incidents Subcommittee

As far as the incidents for last year, even allowing for significantly reduced racing compared to previous years, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of serious incidents, which we believe is due to clubs increasing the emphasis on focus training. We encourage all clubs to continue to place a high priority on focus training as this is consistently the main area from which serious incidents come.

**Rule Changes**

A Postal Ballot was held on formal adoption of three On Trial rules changes. All three changes were approved unanimously, results have been made available on the web.

**Appreciation**

Members of the 2019/20 National Committee were:

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| Richard Mellon | President, member Rules subcommittee |
| Jenny Millar | Vice President, member Dog Incident subcommittee |
| Brian Lindsay | Secretary |
| Patricia Byrne | Treasurer, member Web Team |
| Shireen Pitt | General Committee, member Rules subcommittee, member Development subcommittee |
| Konrad Moskal | General Committee, member Dog Incident subcommittee |
| Sam Brown | General Committee, member Rules subcommittee, member Development subcommittee |
| Steve Pitt | General Committee, Chair Development subcommittee |
| Jennifer Crane | General Committee, member Web Team |
| Peter Samuels | General Committee, member Development subcommittee |
| Phil Lea | General Committee, member Rules Subcommittee, also Supervisory Judge. |
| Frank Lux | Regional Rep NSW |
| Michael Ashton | Regional Rep ACT |
| Martin Watt | Regional Rep SA, Chair Dog Incident subcommittee |
| David Strong | Regional Rep Tas, Chair Rules subcommittee |
| Josh Ellen | Regional Rep Vic, member Dog Incident subcommittee |
| Sally Elsom | Regional Rep Qld, member Development subcommittee |

We also have Non-Committee office bearers:

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| --- | --- |
| Anne Coleman | Titles and Awards |
| Paul Newman | Rules subcommittee |
| Julie Pamplin | Points and Seed times |

The Committee acknowledges the contribution of four current committee members, Phil Lea, Shireen Pitt, Peter Samuels and Martin Watt, who have decided not to stand for the 2020/21 Committee. This will represent a major loss of knowledge and experience.

On the other side of the coin, we welcome three new members, Ben Royes, Belinda O’Shea and Drew Harrison. We look forward to their fresh ideas and enthusiasm. As at date of this report the position of S.A. Regional Representative remains unfilled.

On behalf of the Association, I thank all Committee members and non-Committee office bearers for their contribution and commitment over the year. Without people being prepared to commit their time and expertise, the Association simply would not be able to run.

**New dog titles over the year**

And finally, congratulations to all of our dogs and their handlers who have achieved new titles over the year. While racing was dramatically reduced in 2020, a surprising number of dogs were still able to achieve titles in the 2019/20 financial year, although title applications this year were down to 20 compared to 89 last year.

Based on points recorded as at 30th June 2020, here are the major dog milestones:

Flyball Master Champion 1000 points: 31 (2019: 26, 2018: 24)

Onyx 1300 points: 9 (2019: 26, 2018: 20)

Flyball Dog Grand Champion 2000 points: 9 (2019: 9, 2018: 6)

Flyball Dog Grand Champion Jeddah 3000 points: 2 (2019: 4, 2018: 3)

* 67F Izabella, Rosie Milton
* 542B Roxie, Karen Shields

Flyball Dog Grand Champion Ezri 4000 points: 2 (2019: 0, 2018: 1).

* 1347A Cookie Monster, Lou Stephen
* 1347B Blizzard, Lou Stephen

Well done to all dogs and handlers.

In closing, I would like to wish all the best to Flyball Members, Officials and the new Committee for the year ahead. Let us hope for a great improvement over the one that is ending.

Richard Mellon,

President Australian Flyball Association 2019/20.