



# Annual Report: 2016



Top right, NBA President Roy Liedtke with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Middle right, NBA Executive Director Dave Carter addresses a Capitol news conference following passage of the National Bison Legacy Act. At left, leaders of the Vote Bison steering committee pose with Senate sponsor U.S. Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND).



# A Historic Year for Bison

The last several years have been very good for the bison business. Prices for dressed bull carcasses topped \$4/lb. in 2011, and haven't dipped below that for the past five years. Bison meat items on restaurant menus—once a rarity—are becoming more prevalent in locations ranging from adult casual to fine dining. Major retailers have joined the natural food stores in stocking bison. Live animal prices are strong as ranchers work to expand their herds.

If the last few years qualify as “good,” 2016 qualified as historic.

A campaign launched in 2011 by the National Bison Association, the Inter Tribal Buffalo Council and the Wildlife Conservation Society came to fruition in 2016 as when President Obama formally signed the National Bison Legacy Act, which established bison as the official national mammal of the United States.

The act itself is significant in its symbolism. Designation as the national mammal honors the important role bison have played in the spiritual and cultural lives of native Americans, and it recognizes the fact that the very landscape of North America has been sculpted through thousands of years of interaction of bison.

The Bison Legacy Act also celebrates the powerful story of restoration from a time 130 years ago, when an estimated 700 bison remained alive, to the current vibrant and growing herds on private ranches, public parks, and tribal lands.

Just as significant was the process in which it transpired. The coalition partners, representing private ranchers, conservationists, and tribal leaders, each brought to the campaign their individual perspective on bison. But they were unified by a commitment to honoring this animal everyone loves. In Congress, where ultra-partisan battles regularly wage, a broad bipartisan coalition pushed the act to passage in the Senate

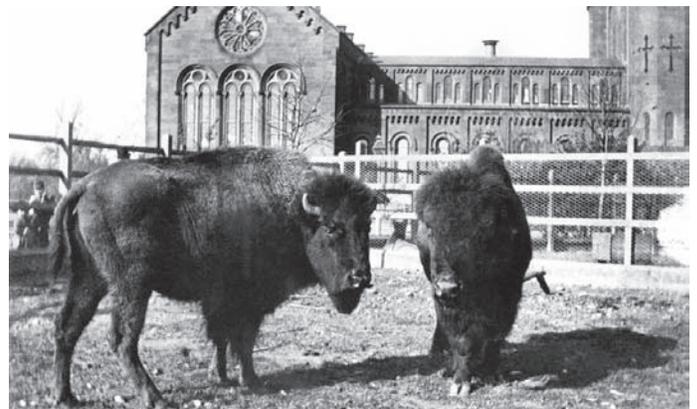
and House by overwhelming margins.

“Restoration” is a word often associated with the bison story over the past century. Restoration on tribal and public lands is important. But private landowners are the stewards of the most of the rangelands historically grazed by bison.

The dynamic growth of the bison marketplace is demonstrating that ranchers—and our customers—are partners in bison restoration. The bison business topped \$341 million last year at the retail and restaurant level. That's a 20% increase over the previous two years. That growth is providing the financial incentive for existing producers to build herds, and for new producers to enter the business.

Even with that growth, bison remains a niche in the agricultural marketplace. And that suits us just fine. Bison ranchers will continue their commitment to the integrity of the animals, and the quality of the meat, even as we continue to build the bison marketplace in the years ahead.

Executive Director



*In 1886, the Smithsonian set up a pen with two bison outside the museum in Washington, D.C., so people could see the animals before they disappeared. Nearly 400,000 bison now roam rangelands and pastures across North America: an incredible story of restoration. What will it take to reach one million?*

# Quality: the Hallmark of our Stability

The past couple of years have been difficult for most of American agriculture. Sagging prices for cattle, corn, wheat and other commodities have put the balance sheet for many farmers and ranchers into the red.

Fortunately, bison is not a commodity. Our ranchers, marketers—and the National Bison Association—have cultivated a strong relationship with customers who value great tasting meat produced without growth hormones or antibiotics, and produced in harmony with the environment.

Consequently, strength, stability and profitability have been hallmarks of the bison marketplace for the past several years.

The future looks just as bright. Demand for bison continues to grow as more people discover that bison meat brings to their family's table the perfect balance of great taste, quality nutrition, and a product that is produced with respect for nature.

The average price received for a young bull carcass--which averaged \$1.60/lb. when the USDA first started keeping track of this information in

2004—topped \$4.00/ lb. in 2011, and has increased steadily since then. As 2016 came to a close, marketers were paying producers more than \$4.60/lb. for young bull carcasses.

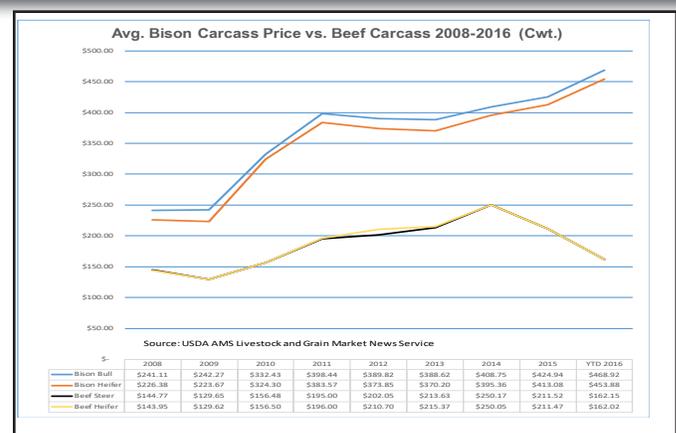
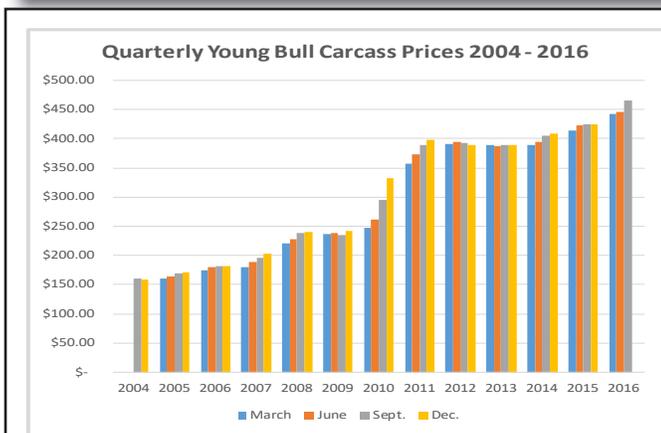
As the public face of the bison business, the National Bison Association has dedicated its efforts throughout this century to building that relationship with the marketplace. And, as the marketplace grows, we have focused new efforts to bring more producers into our business, as well as helping our existing members to build their herds.

The National Bison Association is the best source of information for All Things Buffalo. In 2016, we hosted six Bison Advantage workshops across the country, introduced an all-new *Bison Producers' Handbook*, and established new on-line resources for beginning producers and seasoned ranchers alike. We carried the message of the bison community to the public via the National Association of Farm Broadcasting, individual interviews, and a social media presence. And, we represented the interests of bison producers in Washington, D.C. and other areas where public policy decisions are being made.

### USDA Monthly Bison Report Summary

	Nov. 16 Weighted Avg.	Nov. 15 Weighted Avg.	Nov. 11 Weighted Avg.	One Year % Difference	Five Year % Difference
<b>WHOLESALE PRICES</b>					
Young Bulls	\$4.69	\$4.24	\$3.98	11%	18%
Young Heifers	\$4.54	\$4.10	\$3.85	11%	18%
Aged Bulls	\$4.14	\$3.65	\$3.06	13%	35%
Aged Cows	\$3.98	\$3.53	\$2.85	13%	40%

Source: USDA AMS Grain and Livestock Market Reporting Service



# Great Taste, Great Nutrition: We've Got it All

**The National Voice Promoting Bison Meat** – Media professionals across the country look to the National Bison Association for fresh, accurate information about all aspects of bison meat, and bison production. The *Wall Street Journal* and *Modern Farmer* magazine were only two of the publications carrying major stories about bison ranching, and bison meat, in 2016.

**New Tools for Direct Marketers** – a three-year USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program grant awarded to the National Bison Association in 2016 provides new resources to support members engaged in farmers' markets, on-farm retail, and other direct marketing ventures.

**Social Media Focus** – The NBA's most recent Strategic Plan called for more attention to the emerging area of social media. In 2016, the association continued to sponsor nationally-known food bloggers to visit local bison ranches, and helped to schedule bison marketers and producers at two forums with a large attendance by social media food bloggers.



The NBA was instrumental in articles in *Modern Farmer*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other stories promoting the Bison Advantage in 2016.



Bison is becoming more popular on restaurant menus and American dining tables, thanks in part to resources from the National Bison Association.

**Special Publications For Bison Marketers** – The *Bison World* food supplement in 2016 provides an attractive and useful marketing tool for marketers to use in helping to promote under-utilized cuts of bison meat. The “Why Bison” pamphlet continues to serve as a brief informative brochure and special recipe cards are available to marketers throughout the business.

**BisonFinder App** – Thanks to the National Bison Association, consumers can now download a free app on their smartphones and tablets to help them find nearby restaurants, ranches, and grocery stores that offer delicious, wholesome bison.

**National Bison Day** – For the fourth consecutive year, the NBA partnered with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Inter Tribal Buffalo Council to successfully convince Congress to designate the first Saturday in November as National Bison Day. This event draws media attention to bison, just as the important holiday entertaining season gets underway.

**Setting the Record Straight** – The NBA helps protect the bison industry from inaccurate and misleading reports about widespread crossbreeding of bison with cattle. The association's work included developing and distributing its “What's All the Bull about Beef in Bison?” brochure to retailers, media outlets, producers and consumers.

# A Tool Box of Resources

**2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Bison Producers' Handbook** – In January, the NBA released the new, 300-page book, thoroughly updated and expanded with information provided by more than 25 producers, processors and marketers with a wealth of experience. This handbook is widely recognized as the definitive source of information for all aspects of production and marketing.

**Bison Advantage Workshops** -- the NBA reached out to agricultural extension agents, ag lenders, prospective producers and others, in a series of six Bison Advantage workshops conducted across the country in 2016.

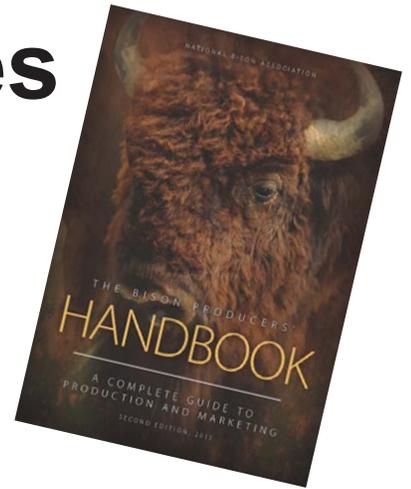
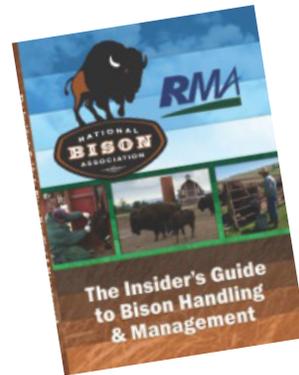
**Bison 301** – In conjunction with the 2nd Edition *Bison Producers' Handbook*, the new Bison 301 on-line curriculum offers in depth studies, exercises and other resources to ag educators, extension agents and new farmers and ranchers.

**Bison 201 and 101** – The Bison 201 on-line curriculum features in-depth information for new producers, and includes interactive worksheets, videos and other material. It is an extension of the Bison 101 introductory on-line course that was introduced a few years ago.

**Farmers' Market Promotion Program** – This multi-year grant, awarded to the NBA by the USDA in September, will be used to develop re-



Ryan Hana, owner of Hana Buffalo Co. in Baldwin City, KS, explains his handling facilities to participants in one of the six Bison Advantage workshops hosted by the NBA through assistance from North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.



sources to help producers involved in direct marketing and agritourism activities. One of the initial resources being funded through this grant is a new educational curriculum and training program for farmers' marketers.

**Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Grant** – The National Bison Association coordinated the development of a consortium of organizations and individual ranches to administer a two-year project to: a) Develop a bison-specific curriculum for educators and extension agents; b) research specific pasture-management protocols; and c) develop a Best Practices manual for producers.

**Insider's Guide to Bison Handling and Management** – This 40-minute DVD—produced with the assistance of USDA's Risk Management Agency—continues to stand as an exceptional educational tool with technical information and visual demonstrations of all aspects of bison handling and business management.

**Gold Trophy Show & Sale** – As the name implies, this is the nation's premier stage for producers to buy the finest bison in North America to improve the quality and profitability of their herds.

**Nationwide Insurance Program** – In 2012, the NBA began working with Nationwide Agribusiness to develop risk management tools specifically for bison producers. In 2016, we continued that partnership with a commitment to enhance and expand coverage.

# Leadership in Public Policy

**Epidemiological Bison Survey** – In December, the USDA released a 200-page reports ummarizing the comprehensive study into the health and management practices on U.S. ranched bison operations. This study, conducted at the request of the National Bison Association, provides a wealth of information that can be used by private producers and public policymakers alike.

**Herd Health** –The NBA continues to collaborate with the National Buffalo Foundation to support research into herd health issues.

**Regulatory Monitoring** – The NBA works with regulatory agencies to make sure new federal rules foster--not inhibit--the American bison business. In 2016, we also coordinated with state/regional bison associations to address onerous new regulations being implemented by local social conservation districts in Montana.

**USDA Price Reporting & Data Collection** – The USDA monthly wholesale bison report--established at the request of the NBA--is a valuable tool for retailers, producers, and marketers.

**Endangered Species** – The NBA actively works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assure that misguided efforts by some groups not hinder the continued restoration of bison to the American landscape via private ranching.

**Opening Asian Markets** – At the request of the NBA, the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service has formally petitioned the government of Korea to reopen its market to U.S. bison meat. FAS has agreed to file a similar petition with the government of Japan.

**Leveling the Playing Field in Europe**—U.S. negotiators have been working to eliminate the current 20% tariff that hinders the growth of bison meat exports to Europe. The NBA will be working with the incoming administration to make sure that commitment continues.

**Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee**—The National Bison Association is represented on the USDA Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee, which provides important input to officials negotiating U.S. trade agreements.



**National Mammal** – A five-year campaign to establish bison as the United States' national mammal came to fruition in 2016 as U.S. Sen. John Hoeven (at left) and other congressional champions carried legislation that was signed into law by President Obama in May. Private ranchers partnered with tribal leaders and conservation organizations to lead this campaign. The national mammal designation puts bison on a stage for those groups to continue to tell the story of bison restoration.



# Building the Bison Community

**Public Relations** – The NBA is the leading national voice for bison producers. For example, a major article in the *Wall Street Journal* discussing the opportunities available in bison ranching was initiated by the National Bison Association.

**Cooperation with the Tribal Community** – Since 2014, the NBA and the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council have operated under a Memorandum of Agreement to work together to restore bison to more rangelands, and to promote bison in the marketplace.

**Cross-Border Collaboration** – The National Bison Association and the Canadian Bison Association work together in many capacities to build stability and profitability for bison producers across North America.

**A Voice for Conservation on Private Ranches** – The NBA continues to collaborate with leaders in the conservation community to address issues that cut across private and public herds. The association's Conservation Committee, the North American Bison Registry, and the Science and Research Committee are developing new tools to promote conservation ranching, and to document the commitment of private bison producers to the conservation of the species.



Photo Above: KELO Radio host Buill Zortman interviews NBA Executive Director Dave Carter at the National Association of Farm Broadcasters meeting. At right, a potential future buffalo rancher gives reasons to the judges during the NBA Junior Judging contest at the National Western Stock Show .

**Farm Broadcasters** – The NBA representatives at the Trade Talk event at the National Association of Farm Broadcasters' annual meeting conducted more than 30 media interviews, and helped to expand important relationships with key farm broadcasters.

**Outreach to the Next Generation** – The NBA booth at the national FFA convention continues to introduce the next generation of producers to the Bison Advantage. We connect students and Ag advisors with seasoned bison producers through our student group membership program.

**Winter cNference** – More than 350 attendees at the 2016 NBA Winter Conference in January experienced three days of education, networking and fun. This was the highest Winter Conference attendance in more than a decade.

**Summer Conference** – In cooperation with the Minnesota Buffalo Association, the NBA welcomed more than 250 members to Otsego and Elk River, MN. The three-day event offered a wealth of presentations on building soil, along with a full-day getaway to Snake River Farm in Elk River, MN.

**Junior Judging** – Now in its ninth year, the NBA Junior Judging Contest drew participation from around the country. Three scholarships were awarded at the 2016 Junior Judging contest at the National Western Stock Show in January.



# It pays to belong to the NBA

**Weekly Update** – The National Bison Association's Email Weekly Update is the most widely read news service in the buffalo business.

**NBA Trading Board** – NBA members get a 48-hour advance look at any item on the Trading Board before ads are published on the website.

**Bison World** – Our quarterly magazine is packed with valuable ranching advice, news about the business, public policy information, and advertising that helps you find the goods and services you need.

**Online Education** – Our online Bison 101, 201 and 301 curriculum are only available for NBA members. Bison 201 contains valuable interactive worksheets that can help you develop your bison business plan.

**Bison Producers' Insurance Coverage** – The National Bison Association worked with Nationwide Agribusiness to develop new products and services specifically tailored to the needs of producers and marketers.

**Conferences** – Our Winter and Summer Conferences are forums for picking up new information, making important connections, and enjoying being a part of the buffalo community.

**Gold Trophy Show and Sale** – This annual event offers producers the opportunity to buy premier breeding stock to improve and expand their herds.

**Junior Judging** – The NBA Junior Judging Contest is drawing increased participation from around the country.



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