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## ***NBA Weekly Update for June 18, 2021***

*The Weekly Update is a service designed to provide National Bison Association members with news and information affecting bison production and marketing. Many items in the Weekly Update are reprinted from outside sources. The content of those articles does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the National Bison Association. The articles are reproduced here only as a means to keep our membership informed as much as possible of all information and opinions relating to bison that is circulating publicly.*

## **More than 230 Registered for Summer Conference**

More than 230 NBA members and friends are expected to head to Cheyenne June 27-29 for the association's 2021 summer conference, featuring two ranch tours, a diverse education program, and ample opportunities to reconnect with old friends and to welcome newcomers to the bison community.

The conference kicks off at 5 p.m. on Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup> with a welcome reception and cornhole tournament co-hosted by the National Buffalo Foundation. Tournament contestants will pay a \$20 entry fee and compete for an NBA membership or one of the customized cornhole boards. All proceeds we go to support the Center of Excellence for

Bison Studies. The evening will feature light appetizers, including tender tails provided by Rocky Mountain natural Meats.

On Monday, participants will head out early for a short trip to Memphis Ranch in Carr, CO, where hosts Greg and Tammy Nott will provide a tour of their relatively new bison operation. The Notts have invited in some fellow vendors from the farmers' markets they participate in to provide breakfast and a lesson in direct marketing for attendees. Then, the attendees will head to Cold Creek Bison near Cheyenne, where Boyd Meyer will provide an overview of a larger commercial bison operation.

Following lunch, attendees can take in a presentation on drought mitigation, and the NBA and Rocky Mountain Bison Associations will conduct their respective membership meetings. Monday evening, back at Little America, conference attendees will enjoy a dinner of bison strip steaks provided by North American Bison, L.L.C., followed by the benefit auction. Don't forget your donated auction items!

On Tuesday, the agenda includes a series of educational events, including discussions of herd health, fencing, and capturing value from carbon sequestration. Tuesday's closing dinner will feature bison roast provided by Frontiere Natural Meat.

Jim Matheson, NBA assistant director, noted, "The Rocky Mountain Bison Association has helped up put together a very enjoyable and educational conference. We look forward to seeing everyone in Cheyenne."

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## **Marketers Express Cautious Optimism in Latest Survey**

Commercial bison marketers participating in the latest twice-yearly survey of market conditions and projections are reporting a strong bounce-back in foodservice demand as restaurants begin to reopen and operate at full capacity. That bounce-back is one of the factors likely contributing to cautious optimism among survey participants on the prospect for continued sales growth to new and existing customers.

Nearly 63 percent of the respondents to the May survey reported that foodservice customers accounted for more than 70% of their product distribution. Last May, that figure was 14 percent.

More than 70 percent of the survey participants also reported that customer demand for their product was up to 10 percent higher this year than during the same period last year. And, 80 percent reported a strong increase in the sales of middle meats (strips, tenderloins and ribeyes), which account for the majority of carcass value. Sales of pet food ingredients were also higher.

A full report on market trends and outlook will be provided during the 2021 NBA Summer Conference in Cheyenne.

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## **USDA Launches Bison 2022**

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) this week published a Federal Register notice requesting public comments on the development and design on the second ever epidemiological study of the United States' bison business.

APHIS plans to conduct a Bison 2022 Study to obtain information about the livestock population and to provide a foundation for possible future studies.

According to the Federal Register Notice, the objectives of the study are to:

- Describe status and changes in the U.S. bison industry from 2014 to 2022, including operation characteristics (such as inventory, size, and type), production purposes, and marketing practices;
- describe current U.S. bison industry production practices and challenges, including animal management and welfare, nutrition and range management, and

- environmental stewardship;
- describe health management and biosecurity practices on U.S. bison operations; and
- describe producer-reported occurrence of select health problems, associated management practices or actions, and causes of bison mortality.

The study will consist of two collection phases. The first phase consists of a producer informed consent form and a self-administered paper or electronic survey administered by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The second, biologics phase, includes a microbe collection record, two fecal parasite collection records, and a forage collection record, each documenting biologic samples collected and submitted by producers who choose to participate in the second phase to receive biologic results from their herds.

All producers in the study will receive a study evaluation upon conclusion of the study. The information collected will be used by APHIS to describe current bison health and management practices, help policymakers and industry make informed decisions, help researchers and private enterprise identify and focus on vital issues related to bison health and productivity, facilitate the education of future producers and veterinarians, and conduct economic analyses of the health and production of the U.S. bison industry.

APHIS will consider all comments that we receive on or before August 13, 2021. People may submit comments by going to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Enter APHIS– 2021–0025 in the Search field. Select the Documents tab, then select the Comment button in the list of documents.

Written comments can also be submitted via Postal mail addressed to Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A–03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737–1238.

All comments must reference Docket No. APHIS–2021–0025.

Dave Carter, NBA executive director, said, “The original study, which resulted in the *Bison 2014* report, provided extremely valuable baseline information regarding some of the herd health and management assistance priorities for U.S. bison producers. This follow-up study will build upon the foundation that was established in *Bison 2014*.”

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## **Mike Fogel, Tainer of Cody the Buffalo, Dies at Age 73**

Bison industry icon Mike Fogel of Houston, MN, was laid to rest on June 4<sup>th</sup>, after passing away on May 29<sup>th</sup> as a result of cancer.

Fogel was best known as the trainer of Cody the Buffalo, who played a starring role in the bison hunt scene in the movie *Dances with Wolves*. He and Cody served as ambassadors for bison, appearing at functions across the country.

In February 2005, Fogel brought Cody to Washington, D.C. at the request of the National Bison Association to be part of a Capitol Hill event celebrating the official release of a limited-edition buffalo nickel as a part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial celebration. Fogel and Cody stood alongside U.S. Sens. Michael Enzi (R-WY) and Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO), along with several Tribal elders and the director of the U.S. Mint on Capitol Hill during that celebration.

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## **Larry Higgins Passes at Age 71**

Funeral services for longtime bison rancher and advocate Larry Alan Higgins of Genoa, CO are scheduled for 1 p.m. Monday, June 21 at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds in Hugo, CO.

Higgins died June 11<sup>th</sup> following a bout of cancer diagnosed five months earlier.

He was born on January 29th, 1950, in Denver, CO to Lowell Mason Higgins and Alice Ellen Higgins. Larry grew up in Denver, CO with his older brother Barney. Larry attended Barnum Elementary, Rishel Middle School and Denver West High School, where he graduated in 1968.

The whole family were members of the Colorado Rifle Club, and when Larry was younger, they would travel across the country competing in shooting matches. While in high school and then after high school, Larry was in a band called Product of Time, where he was the bassist and played guitar. Some of the areas they played in were Denver, Pueblo, Limon, and had some stints in the Northwest part of the country as well.

In his time with the band, he met Jacki and her son Jeremiah. Larry and Jacki started dating in the early 80s. During this time, Larry made a life changing decision and committed his life to Christ. On April 13, 1985, he married Jacki and not long after that adopted Jeremiah; then they had two more sons, Joshua and Josiah.

Together Larry and Jacki (and later Jacki's sister Vicki) managed the family farm and ranch. In 2000, they started raising buffalo and Jacki's love of heart-shaped rocks formed the new business name Heart Rock Bison. Larry's love of bison only grew from there.

He was a member of the National Bison Association since 1999, a member of the Kansas Buffalo Association since 2001, a member of the Rocky Mountain Bison Association since 2002, and a member of the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association since 2010. He served as the vice president from 2009-2010 and then as president from 2010-2015 for the Rocky Mountain Bison Association. Also, starting in 2001 Larry and Jacki started cooking bison burgers in a small stand at the Lincoln County Fair, and it only grew from there. This would have been Larry's 20th year running the buffalo stand.

He was also passionate about church and the body of Christ. He attended Full Gospel Assembly in Limon for 37 years. For the past couple years, Larry was also the director of the Food Bank of the Rockies at Full Gospel Assembly. Even in his last weeks, he still continued to order food from his hospital bed.

Larry is preceded in death by his wife, Jacki Andersen-Higgins and parents, Lowell Mason Higgins and Alice Ellen Higgins. Larry is survived by his three sons and their families: Jeremiah Higgins and his four sons, Tyler, Evan, Dylan and Brecklan; Joshua and Kelly Higgins and their two kids, Emma and Liam; Josiah Higgins; his brother Barney Higgins. There are also many nieces, nephews, cousins, countless friends and family who will miss him dearly.

Visitation before the funeral will begin at 11 a.m. on Monday. Interment will be at 3 p.m. at the Genoa Cemetery.

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***Editor's Note: The following news stories were distributed by organizations not affiliated with the National Bison Association. They may not reflect the opinions or the positions held by the NBA on matters such as genetic integrity, animal management, and other issues.***

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## **Biden's gift to Putin: Crystal sculpture of an American bison, aviator sunglasses**

*(From the Washington Post)*

President Joe Biden gave Russian President Vladimir Putin a gift during their meeting that symbolizes "strength, unity and resilience," according to a White House official.

The crystal sculpture of an American bison was created by Steuben Glass of New York and is considered "a stately interpretation of one of our nation's most majestic mammals."



The two men met Wednesday to discuss the future relationship between the United States and Russia, with special attention on the issues that are behind lingering tensions between the two countries.

While Biden was vice president, the American bison was named the national mammal of the United States after the National Bison Legacy Act was signed into law. The sculpture was presented on a cherry wood base, featuring a commemorative custom-engraved inscription plaque, to pay homage to the first president of the United States — George Washington.

European bison have been reintroduced in Russia over the past 20 years after their numbers have grown in the wild in multiple sites. The only other existing species of bison went extinct in 1927.

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## **The Bison and the Blackfeet**

*(From Sierra Magazine)*

The rolling hills of the Blackfeet reservation were covered with bright-yellow balsamroot flowers, and in the distance the ridgeline of the Rocky Mountains was frosted with thinning snow. It was early June, and in Browning, Montana, the reservation's largest town, clouds of dust rose from the unpaved back streets. In the gas stations and cafes, talk dwelled on the past winter: who ran out of propane, who lost the most cattle, who was in the worst fix.

On the grassy banks of Two Medicine River, though, the bison were doing fine. The Blackfeet Nation manages about 800 animals, and several dozen bison were gathered in and around a large, sunny paddock. Calves stood knock-kneed next to their mothers, their short, golden-brown hair contrasting with the adults' heavy, half-shed winter coats. Ervin Carlson, manager of the Blackfeet Nation's Buffalo Restoration Project, got out of his pickup truck and approached. As I followed, the animals snorted warily. One calf lifted a tail and peed abundantly, out of fear or defiance or both. I recalled a comment by Blackfeet elder Charlie Crow Chief: "They recognize a stranger."

Carlson chuckled, surveying the bison proudly. "The way I look at this herd is that they

were in storage," he said. "They put themselves in storage until they were ready and we were ready." The ancestors of these bison were among the last remaining in Blackfoot territory in the early 1900s, members of a herd that was purchased from a private owner by the Canadian government. More than a century later, in spring 2016, 88 young descendants of that herd were loaded into livestock trailers and transported from Elk Island National Park in northern Alberta to the land of their forebears, where their arrival was celebrated by a waiting crowd.

Read [more](#).

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## **How The National Park Service Controls the Size of Its Picturesque Bison Herd**

*(From the Federal News Network)*

From rattlesnakes to bison, the wildlife are part of the attraction in places like the Grand Canyon National Park. But it's 2021, not 1821, and the bison herd has to be controlled. That's why the National Park Service has initiated what it calls a lethal reduction to explain how it works, spokesman Kait Thomas.

Tom Temin: Ms. Thomas, good to have you on.

Kait Thomas: Great to be here, thank you so much for having me.

Tom Temin: And I was going to ask you how come you're having a bison hunt? And you were going to tell me it's not a hunt, is it?

Kait Thomas: That's right. And I'm really glad that you asked this question. So "hunt" is a misnomer. And once the Park Service announced that we were lethally removing or culling bison from the park, the term hunt caught fire. But that couldn't really be further from what's actually happening. And lethal removal, as this is called, it differs from a hunt in purpose, manner and disposition. So the purpose of this removal is not recreational at all. It's a management activity with the goal of reducing the population of overpopulated or destructive animals, and in this case, bison.

Tom Temin: And what is it about the bison that requires them to be called?

Kait Thomas: Well as for why we're doing this, we'll need to travel back in time a little bit. So the herd of bison that was introduced near the North Rim of Grand Canyon in the early 1900s eventually drifted down to the end of house rock Valley and the state of Arizona began managing this herd back in 1929. And today, this herd has expanded to about three to 500 individuals. But starting in the 1990s, a combination of wildfires, drought, and hunting in the area drove the bison into the North Rim of Grand Canyon, where they have ranged in a very small area almost exclusively since 2009. So these bison have a particularly high impact on the ecosystem, because this ecosystem is not recently adapted to large-scale bison grazing. So the bison here are trampling the soils, they're decimating native plants, they are polluting very fragile water resources, and they even damage irreplaceable archaeological sites. And if I could show you photographs, you can see that parts of the park have just been so trampled that areas that were once really lush valleys have become pockmarked with dust pits and mud holes. And now we have invasive plants on the rise and E. coli contamination from the bison is affecting the North Rim aquifer which, thousands of people depend on every year.

Read more [here](#).

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## **Painted Fiberglass Bison Draws Attention to The Bison Bridge Project**

*(From Quad City Times)*

Bicyclists and walkers slowed as they passed the Ben Butterworth Parkway parking lot, looking curiously at the life-size bison statue made of fiberglass, getting painted with grass

and flowers.

When one cyclist stopped and signed up to support the Bison Bridge Foundation after learning about bison and the project, project creator and environmentalist Chad Pregracke gave him a round of applause and shouted, "We got him!"

"This hopefully will be an attraction to get people to come over and ask what it's about," Pregracke said.

What it's about is the Bison Bridge Foundation's proposal to create a tourist attraction on the Interstate 80 bridge, turning it into a park and event space, with a small herd of bison roaming one side. The bridge would connect state or national parks on both sides of the Mississippi River.

Illinois Department of Transportation officials are currently considering their options for repairing or replacing the bridge, which crosses the Mississippi River connecting LeClaire, Iowa, to Rapids City, Illinois.

Read more [here](#).

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## **Glenrose bison escape enclosure for third time in past year**

*(From KXLY)*

SPOKANE, Wash. — The Glenrose bison escaped their enclosure once again Friday morning.

It was the third time in the past year the large animals were found roaming the streets of the South Hill. The two adult bison, Baxter and Hazel, escaped from their farm in July 2020 and then again in October.

A photo captured by a 4 News Now viewer showed one of the bison in the area of 37th and Glenrose. The new baby bison, Basil, also escaped and was spotted near 29th and Cherry Lane.

Hazel and Basil were captured and taken back to their farm. At last check, their owner was working to get Baxter back into the enclosure.

[Source](#).

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## **USDA Announces Additional Aid to Ag Producers and Businesses in Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative**

*(From USDA Press Release)*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack this week announced additional aid to agricultural producers and businesses as part of the USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative.

Earlier this year, Secretary Vilsack announced plans to use available pandemic assistance funds to address a number of gaps and disparities in previous rounds of aid. As part of the Pandemic Assistance initiative announced in March, USDA pledged to continue Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments and to provide aid to producers and businesses left behind. Implementation of the assistance announced today will continue within 60 days to include support to timber harvesters, biofuels, dairy farmers and processors, livestock farmers and contract growers of poultry, assistance for organic cost share, and grants for PPE.

"USDA is honoring its commitment to get financial assistance to producers and critical agricultural businesses, especially those left out or underserved by previous COVID aid," said Secretary Vilsack. "These investments through USDA Pandemic Assistance will help our food, agriculture and forestry sectors get back on track and plan for the future. Since

January, USDA has provided more than \$11 billion of assistance directly to producers and food and agriculture business."

In March, USDA announced \$6 billion (see Part 1) in available funds through Pandemic Assistance to support a number of new programs or to modify existing efforts. The following programming is planned for implementation within 60 days, which will continue to be focused on filling gaps in previous rounds of assistance and helping beginning, socially disadvantaged and small and medium sized producers that need support most.

Read [more](#).

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## **Registration is now open for the 2021 Southern Family Farmers & Food Systems Conference**

August 8-10, 2021

Texas State University | San Marcos

Hosts Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, the Council for Healthy Food Systems, and the Small Producers Initiative of Texas State University cannot wait to gather in-person with our amazing community of farmers, ranchers, allied organizations, homesteaders, gardeners, chefs, and advocates of local and regional foods!

This annual Conference, previously known as the Farm & Food Leadership Conference, has a new name to reflect our ongoing partnership and our expanded reach.

Sunday, Aug. 8, is devoted to in-depth workshops, while Monday and Tuesday present a wide range of topics with six concurrent tracks covering livestock, crops, policy and social issues, technology, finance/business/marketing, research, and topics for homesteaders and startups.

[REGISTER TODAY.](#)

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## **Parson Signs MOLivestock Inspection Law**

*(From NewsTribune.com)*

Gov. Mike Parson signed legislation Thursday limiting who can inspect certain agricultural production facilities around the state of Missouri.

House Bill 573, introduced by state Rep. Kent Haden, R-Mexico, grants exclusive inspection authority of facilities and grounds producing eggs, milk or dairy, or raising livestock or poultry, to the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, county sheriffs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other federal or state agencies with statutory or regulatory authority over those products and animals.

The legislation also notes testimony or evidence regarding the conditions or practices at farms and production facilities will not be admissible in criminal prosecution unless provided by one of the agencies with inspection authority, individuals authorized to be on the grounds by the owner, individuals with a search warrant for the grounds, or individuals who witness an event or conditions from public or neighboring areas.

Full [text](#).

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## **Vilsack Pledges 'Significant' Increase in Meat Processing**

*(From AgriPulse)*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told senators Tuesday that his department is working on measures that will "significantly" increase U.S. meatpacking capacity, a top priority of



producers who believe industry concentration is depressing livestock prices.

Testifying before the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, Vilsack also endorsed the idea of creating a new office in USDA to investigate meatpacker purchasing practices and suggested that other agribusiness sectors were ripe for reform, implying that existing patent laws were discouraging competition in the seed business.

Vilsack provided few clues as to what he would do to increase meat processing capacity, but he told Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., USDA was looking at offering low-interest loans for new processing facilities. Vilsack still has unspent funding available from coronavirus relief packages that Congress has passed.

“We are going to come up with a very creative way to significantly expand processing capacity in this country,” Vilsack said.

After the hearing, Agri-Pulse asked Vilsack for more details about USDA’s plans, but he declined to elaborate. “More to come later,” he said.

In Vilsack’s view, increasing processing capacity would both help address producers’ pricing concerns as well as enable the industry to better shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the recent ransomware attack on sector giant JBS USA.

“If you have too much concentration you may have a very efficient system, but you may have ... one that's not particularly resilient. I think we saw that during the pandemic,” Vilsack said.

He said the department would be making announcements in the next few weeks about funding for two small programs authorized to help small-scale processors. One would help processors qualify for federal inspection, which would, in turn, enable them to sell across state lines and into export markets. Another would reduce the overtime fees that small processors must pay for federal inspection services.

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## **US And EU Declare New Era of Trade Cooperation**

*(From AgriPulse)*

The U.S. and European Union remain at odds over major trade issues, but leaders announced a new age of cooperation Tuesday, and U.S. farmers stand to benefit if leaders can follow through on the goodwill expressed in Brussels this week.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and European Commission Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis [announced a deal aimed at ending tariffs tied to aircraft subsidies](#), but they and others stressed that the agreement is just the beginning of more cooperation on trade and other issues.

“This shows the new spirit of cooperation between the EU and the U.S. and that we can solve the other issues to our mutual benefit,” said Dombrovskis. “Together we can deliver for our citizens and businesses.”

A key dispute that the U.S. agriculture sector would like to see resolved is over U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Europe, which resulted in EU tariffs on U.S. corn, rice and other commodities.

The U.S. and EU hope to have a resolution by the end of the year, both parties said in a joint statement Tuesday.

“We will engage in discussions to allow the resolution of existing differences on measures regarding steel and aluminum before the end of the year,” the statement said. “In this regard, we are determined to work together to resolve tensions arising from the U.S. application of tariffs on imports from the EU under U.S. Section 232 and will work towards allowing trade to recover from its 2020 lows and ending the WTO disputes.”

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### ***Save the Date!***

- 6/14/2021 - Lester Bison Farm Complete Dispersal Auction - WI
- 6/27 - 29/2021 - National Bison Assn. Summer Conference - Cheyenne, WY
- 11/8/2021 - Antelope Island State Park Production Auction - UT
- 12/04/2021 - Kansas Buffalo Association Annual Sale - KS
- 12/04/2021 - Western Bison Association Show and Sale - UT
- 12/7/2021 - Northern Range Buffalo Simulcast Auction - SD
- 1/1/2022 - Prairie Legends Bison Auction - TBD
- 1/8/2022 - Turner Bison Exchange Prairie Performance Bison Auction - SD
- 2/12/2022 - Dakota Dynamite Buffalo Sale - SD
- 2/19/2022 - Dakota Territory Bison Association Auction - SD

Please visit <https://bisoncentral.com/calendar/> for details and more up-to-date events. If you have a bison event coming up that's not listed, please send the details to [jim@bisoncentral.com](mailto:jim@bisoncentral.com) and the NBA will post the event on its website at no charge.

[Click Here for NBA Calendar of Events](#)

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