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NBA Weekly Update for September 18, 2020

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.

NBA Welcomes News of CFAP Eligibility

The National Bison Association welcomed USDA's announcement today that bison producers are now eligible for relief under the second round of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP-2) payments.

"Bison producers now have the ability to receive assistance in weathering the economic storm that has been wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association. "This is welcome news, and we thank everyone who helped bring our ranchers and farmers into this program."

The National Bison Association initially contacted Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue in late March to request that bison producers be included in any COVID assistance package developed for agriculture. Following that request, the association provided USDA with a series of reports documenting the extent of the economic impact that the pandemic was creating for bison producers and marketers.

Carter noted that bison ranchers were frustrated as USDA excluded them from eligibility when CFAP assistance packages were announced in May and July.

"Bison producers across the country weighed in with public comments to USDA and letters to their Senators and Representatives. It's encouraging to know that their voices were

heard,” Carter said.

“The long-term outlook for our business is very bright, but ranchers need to be able to get through the financial difficulties created by COVID-19,” he added. “Eligibility for CFAP assistance will definitely help.”

Bison ranchers can begin the process of applying for assistance at <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap/specialty-livestock>.

A Note to NBA Members

Since the COVID-19 Pandemic hit in mid-March, the National Bison Association has worked diligently with our allies on both sides of the aisle in the U.S. Senate and House and with North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring to urge that bison producers be eligible for any relief offered to agriculture under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

We also asked our members to reach out to their elected officials, and to file public comments with USDA to urge that bison producers be eligible for assistance under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. Many of you made phone calls, sent emails, wrote letters, and submitted comments.

The announcement today that bison are now eligible for assistance would not have happened without those combined efforts. If you contacted your Senators or Representatives to request their help over the past few months, please reach out to them one more time to thank them for their support, and thank you for your efforts.

Urge Congressional Allies to Push for Section 32

NBA members are once again being urged to reach out to the Senators and Representatives, this time to asks their selected officials to weigh to attain a USDA Section 32 purchase program for bison meat.

The National Bison Association formally filed a request on August 28th with USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service to approve a \$17 million purchase of bison meat under the Section 32 commodity purchase program. The request was accompanied by a white paper documenting the extent of economic disruption being felt in the bison business.

An official at AMS told NBA Executive Director Dave Carter yesterday that the association’s request is under consideration for funding when the next fiscal year begins October 1st. But she also said there has been a surge of Section 32 requests in recent months, and the agency will be deciding which proposals are funded.

She added that letters from Senators and Representatives in support of a proposal can play a role in helping the agency to determine which requests are authorized.

Carter said, “We need to get our friends in the Senate and the House to send letters of support of our Section 32 request to USDA AMS as soon as possible.”

Members wanting to send a letter can use the template below to customize, and this [link](#) to find the contact information for their Senators and Representatives.

Dear Senator (Or Representative) _____:

I am a bison rancher (describe a bit about yourself and your operation, including your location).

The National Bison Association recently filed a request with USDA’s Agricultural marketing Service for a \$17 million Section 32 purchase of bison meat. I am writing to request that you contact AMS to urge approval for this request.

COVID-19 has seriously impacted bison producers of all sizes. The closure of restaurants in March eliminated the primary market for the high-value cuts of bison, and resulted in a \$0.40/lb. drop in the carcass price within weeks. The scaling back of farmers' markets has constricted another important market outlet for bison, and the loss of agritourism opportunities has compounded the problem.

Unfortunately, live bison prices were already experiencing downward pressure last fall because of an unexpected large supply of market-ready animals. COVID-19 only compounded that problem.

(Add any personal impact information)

Although the National Bison Association provided USDA with substantial data documenting the scope of the COVID-19 impact, bison producers have not been included as eligible recipients for CFAP assistance.

Approval of a Section 32 purchase would help reduce the backlog of animals, and would provide some much-needed strength and stability ranchers, finishers, and marketers alike

The AMS officials directly handling this request are:
Jennifer Porter, Deputy Administrator for Livestock and Poultry Programs,
Jennifer.Porter@usda.gov
David Tuckwiller, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Procurement,
David.Tuckwiller@ams.usda.gov.

I appreciate any assistance you can provide in encouraging USDA to approve the National Bison Association's request.

With Best Regards
(Your Name and contact info)

More Participation Needed for New USDA Weaned Calf Report

The National Bison Association is urging producers to participate in the new annual weaned calf report being developed by USDA's Livestock and Grain Market Reporting Service.

Dave Carter, NBA executive director, noted that USDA began developing that report this year at the request for the NBA.

"Major finishers and marketers meeting in January agreed that an annual report of weaned calves would provide valuable information regarding the number of animals that would be available for processing 15-20 months down the road. Accordingly, they could adjust the sales and marketing efforts to make sure we didn't experience a surplus of bison ready for processing."

Amber Wells Sisco of USDA's Livestock and Grain Market Reporting Service has been working to gather the information needed for that report. She notified the NBA this week that additional participation is still needed. Anyone wanting to provide that information should contact her at: amber.wells@usda.gov.

Cancellation of 2021 National Western Stock Show Prompts Board to Look at Conference, GTSS Options

The National Bison Association Board of Directors voted yesterday to consider options for relocating and rescheduling the Gold Trophy Show and Sale and the annual NBA membership meeting in early 2021.

The move came after the official announcement that the National Western Stock Show

was postponing its 115th annual event until January 2022.

Among the options under discussion is to collaborate with the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association and the North Dakota Bison Association to host a bison sale and membership meeting in Rapid City, SD. Both events would include a virtual participation option for members unable, or hesitant about in-person gatherings.

“Gold trophy, and our annual meeting are important events, not only for the NBA, but for the bison business,” said Donnis Baggett, president of the NBA. “The board is working to develop plans in which we can meet these needs safely, while providing an opportunity for members to connect this winter.”

NBA Leaders Meet with Senate Leaders Regarding Bison Priorities

Two top agricultural leaders in the U.S. Senate assured top National Bison Association officials Wednesday that they are weighing in to support the association’s efforts to gain approval of a Section 32 purchase program request, as well as eligibility for bison producers under future COVID-19 assistance.

Meeting with the NBA officials via conference call were U.S. Sens. John Hoeven (R-ND), chair of the Senate Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, and John Boozman (R-AR), who is poised to assume leadership of the Senate Agriculture Committee next year. NBA participants were President Donnis Baggett, Executive Director Dave Darter, Assistant Director Jim Matheson, and member Demetrius McDaniel of Texas. McDaniel, a bison producer who also engages in public policy work in Washington, D.C. helped arrange for the meeting.

Carter briefed the Senators on the economic disruption impacting the bison business because of COVID-19 and other factors. Carter explained that the NBA was deeply disappointed that bison producers had not been deemed eligible for assistance under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) despite providing USDA with extensive information regarding the challenges facing the bison industry.

Following the latest denial of eligibility, the NBA filed a formal request for USDA to purchase \$17 million in bison meat through the Section 32 surplus removal program.

Hoeven and Boozman said that they had expressed their concerns about the exclusion of bison producers from CFAP assistance in a meeting with Bill Northey, USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. They also assure the NBA that they would urge USDA to approve a purchase of bison meat.

Hoeven also noted that consideration of the Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act had gotten sidetracked during the COVID-19 pandemic, but said that the time was appropriate to urge the House Energy and Commerce Committee to hold a hearing on its version of the bill.

Bull Prices Marginally Higher, Heifers Lower in Latest USDA Report

Dressed young bull carcasses once again moved above \$400/cwt. in August, but dressed heifer carcasses were lower, according to the latest Monthly Wholesale Bison Report released by USDA’s Livestock and grain Market Reporting Service. Young bison bull carcasses were \$400.16/cwt. in August, which was \$1.12 higher than the previous month but \$18.59 lower than in August 2019. Dressed heifers averaged \$373.40/cwt. in August, which was \$9.12 lower than July and \$48.65/cwt. lower than the previous July.

Older cows and bulls were both lower in August.

According to USDA’s National Agricultural statistics Service, 42,096 bison have been processed year-to-date, which is 15.5 percent higher than the same time period in 2019.

The report will be posted in the [Bison Pricing](#) section of bisoncentral.com next week. You can see the USDA report here - https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls526.txt.

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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National Western Stock Show Postponed Until January 2022 Because Of COVID-19

(From CBS4.com)

The 115th annual National Western Stock Show will not happen in January of 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The giant trade show and rodeo will resume in January 2022, officials announced Monday.

Established in 1911, the National Western Stock Show is the premier livestock, rodeo, and horse show in the United States. The 16-day show is Colorado's largest western trade show. It draws over 700,000 attendees and drives an economic impact of nearly \$120 million in January alone, according to officials.

Paul Andrews, president and CEO of the NWSS, spoke at a news conference on Monday.

"The current health rules in place regarding social distancing and large gatherings make it impossible for us to provide an experience that our loyal fans expect at the show," Andrews said. "As an indoor event in the heart of winter, we could not risk the safety and health of our guests, our exhibitors, our volunteers, and our staff, this January, as the pandemic rages on."

[Full text.](#)

Refuge bison auction ending after 49 years

(From The Lawton Constitution)

A 49-year tradition at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is coming to an end. The refuge has joined the Bison Conservation Initiative implemented by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt earlier this year. At the time of his announcement, Bernhardt reaffirmed the U.S. Department of the Interior's commitment to conservation and restoration of wild American bison.

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, along with other public lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management,

plays a vital role in the conservation of American bison. Consistent with the Bison Conservation Initiative and ongoing bison conservation efforts, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has ended its annual bison auction.

The annual Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge bison (or buffalo) auction operated for 49 years and offered surplus bison for sale to the public.

"I know this may come as a disappointment to some of our public, as the bison auction is a beloved tradition. However, this transition supports the long-term preservation of the species and bison herds throughout the nation. Through the (Bison Conservation Initiative), the refuge continues its commitment to a healthy, genetically diverse bison conservation herd for all Americans," Refuge Manager David Farmer said.

In 2020, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge joins the rest of the National Wildlife Refuge System in providing 100 percent donation of surplus bison to conservation partners, including tribes or intertribal organizations.

Read [more](#).

Men On Motorcycles Accused Of Harassing Yellowstone Bison *(From NBC Montana)*

Two brothers accused of riding motorcycles off-road and harassing bison in Yellowstone National Park have pleaded not guilty.

Twenty-five-year-old Dallin McAllister, of Provo, Utah, and 36-year-old Tyler McAllister, of Gilbert, Arizona, entered the pleas Monday in federal court.

Each is charged with operating a motor vehicle in prohibited areas and feeding, touching, teasing, frightening or intentionally disturbing wildlife.

Yellowstone officials say the two drove off-road near a group of bison Friday evening in western Yellowstone.

[Source](#).

APHIS Proposes Animal Welfare Amendments for Research Facilities to Remove Duplicative and Unnecessary Information Requirements *(From USDA APHIS)*

Washington, D.C.-The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing changes to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations to reduce the administrative burden for research facilities, while ensuring that research animals continue to receive humane care. The proposed changes would apply to approximately 1,100 registered facilities that use animals to conduct research, teaching, testing and experimentation.

The proposed rule addresses unduly burdensome and unclear administrative requirements regarding inactive facilities, redundant facility contact information status reports, conditions for registration termination, the validity period of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee-approved protocols, and signatures on animal research facility annual reports.

These changes are being proposed as part of USDA's commitment to regulatory reform and are in compliance with the 21st Century Cures Act, which directs USDA to work with the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health to complete a review of regulations and policies for the care and use of laboratory animals. It also requires USDA to make revisions to reduce the administrative burden on the research community, while maintaining the integrity of research findings and the protection of

research animals.

[Source.](#)

USDA Updates Brucellosis and Bovine Tuberculosis Import Regulations

(From USDA APHIS)

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is updating its import regulations to establish a system for classifying the brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis (TB) status levels for foreign regions. APHIS is also outlining the requirements for animals from each status level to enter the United States. These changes will help protect the U.S. herd against introduction of bovine TB and brucellosis via imported animals, while facilitating safe trade of unaffected animals.

The United States has made great strides in eradicating these two diseases, and cases are becoming increasingly rare. However, in recent years, most new TB cases identified in the United States have been in imported animals. The updated regulations will enhance efforts to keep disease from entering the country by giving us a format to review and classify the status of foreign regions for TB and brucellosis, and allowing us to ensure only healthy animals enter our country.

The new regulations include numerous updates to address issues raised during the public comment period, including clarifying definitions and requirements. In addition, they remove age limits for testing imported animals and expand the bovine TB testing requirements for sexually-intact animals imported for breeding or feeding.

The new regulations are effective 30 days after Federal Register publication. However, APHIS recognizes that there are many regions that enjoy particular status under the current regulations. These regions will continue to be able to trade with the United States under the terms of the status they currently hold until APHIS is able to review and adjust their status using the new approach spelled out in this final rule.

[Source.](#)

Can Loans Tied To Soil Health Save Agriculture? A New \$250 Million Fund Wants To Find Out

(From Forbes)

America's soil health is in dire straits and a new investment fund, rePlant Capital, has been formed to help clove the crisis with capitalism by tying interest rates for farm loans to improvements in soil's carbon and water storage as a way to save farmers from the disastrous impacts of climate change.

A third of the country's topsoil has eroded in the past 50 years, part of a warning from the United Nations in 2015 that predicts soil degradation will be one of the central threats to human health in the coming decades. Farmers are seeking to regenerate soil after decades of misuse from chemical fertilizers and herbicides, but transitioning to less harsh farming practices is costly, and nature cannot solve the problem according to human timeline, requiring 500 years or more to create an inch of fresh topsoil under natural conditions.

Based in Boulder, Colorado and Oakland, rePlant will deploy \$250 million to farmers transitioning to regenerative or organic practices, with about \$200 million of that going towards loans based on soil health metrics. The balance will fund equity investments in farms that are maxed out on debt. Most of the fund's investors are women.

"By talking about soil health, you're immediately talking about water conservation. You're immediately talking about water filtration and I would argue those metrics are as important as carbon," rePlant cofounder Robyn O'Brien says, explaining how years of fertilizer and

herbicide use have stripped soils of nutrients and made them less effective at absorbing water. “We are deploying technologies and services that will accelerate this change.”

Read more [here](#).

Whole Foods CEO John Mackey Says Many People Are Done With Grocery Stores

(From Wall Street Journal)

John Mackey helped popularize organic food when he co-founded Whole Foods Market four decades ago. Over the past several months, his chain of more than 500 stores has scrambled to adapt to another major shift in how Americans buy groceries.

Since the coronavirus pandemic gripped the U.S. in March, consumers have been ordering more groceries online, making bigger purchases at a time and avoiding lingering in Whole Foods’ aisles. To meet the rush for grocery deliveries, the chain temporarily closed some urban stores to walk-in shoppers and converted them to handling online orders only. The grocer is also expanding its pickup operations.

“When things return to normal, there will be a lot of people who don’t go back to shopping in-person,” Mr. Mackey predicts.

The pandemic has accelerated an online-grocery movement that Whole Foods was already seeking to capitalize on as part of Amazon.com Inc. AMZN -0.43% Mr. Mackey sold Whole Foods to the online-retail juggernaut for \$13.4 billion in 2017, one of the decisions he recounts in his new book out this month, “Conscious Leadership: Elevating Humanity Through Business.” In the second quarter of this year, Amazon’s online grocery sales, which include Whole Foods’ business, tripled from a year ago.

Read more [here](#) (subscription required).

Pandemic Effect On Restaurants As Bad As It Seems: NRA Survey

(From Meatingplace.com)

The first six months of the coronavirus pandemic forced nearly one in six U.S. restaurants to close either permanently or for the long term, according to a new survey from the National Restaurant Association (NRA).

The survey also notes that nearly 3 million restaurant employees are still out of work and the industry is on track to lose \$240 billion in sales by the end of the year. Restaurant operators also reported that they are still struggling to survive and don’t expect their positions to improve over the next six months. Overall sales since the pandemic began fell 34% on average and at least 100,000 restaurants are expected to close by the end of 2020, the NRA survey reported. Operators also say current staffing levels are just 71% of what they typically would be in the absence of COVID-19.

The pandemic is affecting nearly all segments of the restaurant industry, from independent owners to multi-unit franchise operators, NRA found. The organization added that 40% of operators believe it is unlikely their restaurant will still be in business in six months without additional relief packages from the federal government. That topic is covered in a letter the NRA sent to congressional leaders this week seeking new small business programs in bipartisan stand-alone bills to support the restaurant industry.

Plant-Based Food Producers Sue State In Federal Court To Block Disclaimer Requirement

(From Food Safety News)

Burgers, hotdogs, meatballs, jerky, sausage, chorizo, bacon and corned beef are among the products that will be defined as meat in Oklahoma on Nov. 1 when the Sooner State's "Meat Consumer Protection Act" becomes law.

The Act prohibits sellers of plant-based foods from using "meat terms" to describe their foods without disclaimers in the "same size and prominence" as their product name that their product is plant-based.

Illinois-based Upton's Naturals Co. and the Plant-Based Foods Association (PBFA) Wednesday sued the state of Oklahoma in federal court, seeking an injunction to prevent the labeling law from taking effect. Making Upton Naturals the top Plaintiff is a strategy as the company markets to vegans and its smart packaging labels say everything "100% Vegan."

But come Nov. 1, it will be illegal to sell "vegan" bacon or other products that will be defined as meat without what is called the "Compelled Disclaimer" that the product is plant-based in lettering that is the same size and prominence as the product name.

The Act expressly prohibits advertising "a product as meat that is not derived from harvested production livestock." However, it says "product packaging for plant-based items shall not be considered in violation of [the Act] so long as the packaging displays that the product is derived from plant-based sources in type that is uniform in size and prominence to the name of the product."

"The Act would fail any level of First Amendment scrutiny," says the court complaint. "The Act is a content-based regulation of speech."

The plaintiffs say House Bill 3806 was "brought" to the Oklahoma Legislature by the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association during the last legislative session. They say "powerful meat industry lobbying groups," asked the Legislature to make it more difficult for sellers of meat alternatives to compete with the meat industry. It prohibits the use of terms like "beef," or "poultry" or "pork" without the "Compelled Disclaimer."

The lead sponsor of HB 3806 was Rep. Toni Hasenbeck, R-Elgin, OK. The Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association recognized Rep. Hasenbeck in August with its top legislative award.



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Save the Date!

- 10/17/2020 - Texas Bison Association Virtual Fall Meeting - Online
- 11/07/2020 - 55th Annual Custer State Park Fall Classic Bison Auction - SD
- 11/16/2020 - Brownotter Buffalo Ranch Annual Production Sale – SD
- 11/16/2020 - Antelope Island State Park Bison Auction - UT
- 11/17/2020 - Bison on the Bear Annual Production Auction - ID
- 11/21/2020 - Coyote Trail Buffalo Annual Production Auction - SD
- 11/28/2020 - Minnesota Bison Association's Legends of the Fall Show/Sale - MN

- 12/05/2020 - Kansas Buffalo Association Annual Production Sale - KS
- 12/05/2020 - Western Bison Association Meeting and Show/Sale - UT
- 12/8/2020 - Northern Range Buffalo Simulcast Consignment Auction - SD
- 12/19/2020 - North Dakota Buffalo Assn. Meeting/Simulcast Auction - ND
- 1/02/2020 - Prairie Legends Bison Auction - NE
- 1/08/2021 - Montana Bison Assn. Winter Conference - MT
- 1/9/2021 - Turner Bison Exchange Prairie Performance Auction - SD
- 1/20/2021 - National Bison Association Winter Conference - Postponed
- 1/23/2021 - National Bison Association Gold Trophy Show/Sale - Postponed
- 2/6/2021 - DTBA Black Hills Buffalo Classic Simulcast Auction - SD
- 6/27/2021 - National Bison Assn. Summer Conference - Cheyenne, WY

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 and the NBA will post the event on its website at no charge.

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

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