



National Bison Association

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Weekly Update from the National Bison Association

A news and update service *exclusively* for members of the National Bison Association.
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January 26, 2018

Roaming to Success a Huge... Success

Denver became the hub for All Thing Bison last week as nearly 500 producers, marketers and enthusiasts gathered at the Renaissance Hotel for the National Bison Association's 23rd annual winter conference, and 137 live bison took up temporary residence at the National Western Stock Show.

Convened under the theme, *Roaming to Success*, the conference attendees picked up valuable information ranging from time-tested handling techniques to technological innovations in managing grassland health during the three-day event. Members also elected officers and a director-at large to guide the association during the coming year, feasted on a variety of bison-centered dishes, and enjoyed an opportunity to build relationships with fellow producers.

The conference began on Wednesday with a presentation from Mark Freeman and Todd Rawlings of Microsoft, covering potential technological developments that can increase the ability of producers to monitor herd health, land resources, and other factors. A panel conducted later that afternoon included two producers using grain finishing protocols, and two producers using grass-finishing methods. Entitled, *Different Methods, Many Reasons*, the panel provided information on why producers use a variety of protocols to finish their bison.

Thursday's sessions opened with an informal panel discussing the many facets of bison restoration, Mike Duncan, former President of the NBA, and Mark Silzer, former president of the Canadian Bison Association, were joined on stage by Patrick Toomey of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, Dr. Bill Gibbons of South Dakota State University, Phil Baird of Sente Gleske University, and Corissa Busse of the Nature Conservancy. They each discussed their perspective on restoring herds across North America.

The remaining morning session was devoted to the Mentors' Session, where four experienced bison producers joined moderator John Graves on stage to discuss fencing, low stress handling, vaccinations, and animal selection.

Following the chili cookoff luncheon, in which Roger Provencher of Canadian Prairie's recipe won, Turner Ranch mangers Bob Wesley of the McGinley Ranch in Nebraska, Aaron Paulson of

the Snowcrest Ranch in Montana, and Dr. Tom Bragg of the Deer Creek Ranch in Nebraska, delivered presentations on management flexibility, low-stress handling, and parasite control.

On Friday, for producers experiencing death losses from Mycoplasma Bovis shared their insight with conference attendees, before the NBA conducted its annual business meeting. The conference concluded with the annual banquet and Gold Trophy awards presentations, an event attended by over 600 people.

“Roughly 20 percent of our attendees were first-time participants, and another 20 percent have been attending NBA conferences for more than 10 years,” said Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association. “That reflects a healthy, growing organization.”

Jim Matheson, assistant director for the NBA added, “The wealth of information provided at the conference was phenomenal. And, for the first time, we filmed the sessions, thanks to a sponsorship from Southwest Plains Bison Co., and will be posting those presentations online in the members’ only section of bisoncentral.com.”

Carter and Matheson thank the Winter Conference planning committee for their hard work in organizing the annual event. That committee consists of Beverly Brown of Texas as chair, John Graves of Colorado, Deb Thieman of Colorado, Jud Seaman of South Dakota, Kim Zimmerman of California, Gail Griffin of Minnesota, Susan Maass of Colorado, Amy Eudy of Texas, Christine Hung of Montana, and Roy Liedtke and Lauren Dobson of Texas.

GTSS Sells 136 Head, 18 Carcasses in Denver

The largest Gold Trophy Sale in nearly two decades unfolded on Saturday, with 136 live bison and 18 carcasses auctioned at the National Western Stock Show Livestock Center arena in Denver.

The Grand Champion Male, a two-year-old bull shown by Silver Creek Ranch from Manitoba, CA, brought \$27,500. The Grand Champion female selection this year was a Pen of Five Heifer Calves, that sold for a total of \$25,000. Two-year-old bulls averaged \$11,046, compared to an average of \$9,344 in 2017. Yearling bulls averaged \$5,959 this year, compared to \$9,940 in 2017. Two-year old bred heifers averaged \$4,783 compared to \$7,750 in 2017, and yearling heifers averaged \$3,850 this sale, compared to \$4,331 in 2017.

On Friday evening, Intermountain Bison Company accepted the Producer of the Year award, garnering trophies for Gold Trophy Yearling Heifer, 2nd place bull calf and pen of five yearling heifers, 3rd place bull calf, and pen-of-five heifer calves, and fifth place bull calf. Torch River Bison, a first-time consignor Saskatchewan, CA, won Rookie of the Year with the Reserve Grand Champion male yearling bull, and the 3rd place two-year-old bull. Medicine Wheel Ranch earned Grand Champion female with their pen of 5 yearling heifer class entry. The Reserve Grand Champion Female was shown by Trails End River Bison of South Dakota. Diamond Tail Ranch of Colorado was the top market producer of the year.

See the full results here. <https://bisoncentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-Sales-Results-Web.2.pdf>

Winter Conference Survey Out Now, Due Wednesday

Attendees of the 2018 NBA Winter Conference were emailed a link on Thursday to participate in a short survey to help us critique the event. Attendee input is critical to our success and helps us cater our programming to our members' needs.

If you attended the conference and did not receive the invitation to participate in the survey, please email Jim@bisoncentral.com.

Officers Elected for 2018

Dick Gehring of Moundridge, KS was elected by acclamation as the National Bison Association's president for 2018 during the annual membership meeting held with the NBA Winter Conference in Denver. Gehring took the reigns from Roy Liedtke of Texas, who was term limited, and who will now serve as the NBA Past President and Board Chair for the next two years.

Following his election, Gehring said, "I'm looking forward to moving forward with the priorities our board has established, and in making sure that our staff is equipped to continue to guide the growth of the National Bison Association."

Gehring has been involved in the buffalo business since the 1980's and began his service on the NBA board as a regional director in 2012. He moves up from the vice president's position.

Donnis Baggett of Texas was elected as new vice president for the NBA. Baggett and his wife, Beverly Brown, operate Lucky B Bison Ranch near Bryant, TX. He served on the board, and as officer, from 2010 – 2013.

Tom Barthel of Minnesota was elected as the new Secretary Treasurer. Barthel and his wife, Gail operate Snake River Farm near Becker, MN. He began his service on the board in 2015.

And, members elected Boyd Meyer of Colorado as the association's new director at large. Boyd and his wife Alison, operate Cold Creek Bison Co. in Wyoming. He previous served on the board from 2010 – 2014.

Karen Conley Named Member of the Year

Karen Conley of South Dakota, was honored at the National Bison Association annual banquet as the association's Member of the Year, based upon her many contributions as an active NBA member.

In making the announcement, Gail Griffin of the Past President's Council, reported that 12 nominations were submitted for Member of the Year this year.

Conley was selected based upon her extensive commitment to the organization, including:

The individual has distinguished themselves by:

- Years of volunteerism at NBA events as well as State & Regionals;
- Actively serving on the NBA Board of Directors and at least two NBA committees;
- Participating in the 2017 NBA Washington DC “Round Up”;
- Serving on two International Bison conference planning committees;
- Assisting the NBA with photography, Gold Trophy catalog production, and coordination of the annual sale; and
- More than twenty years of service as a critical voice in the bison industry.

Conley is stepping down as the executive director of the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association and has completed her term as Secretary Treasurer on the NBA board in January. However, she intends to remain active in the state/regional and national associations, and in the buffalo business.

National Bison Association 2018 Jr. Judging Contest Winners Announced

Winners Hail from Colorado, Kansas, Texas, South Dakota

DENVER—Young people ages 8 to 21 competed Jan. 17, for \$3,600 in individual scholarships, plaques and bragging rights at the National Bison Association’s (NBA) Tenth Annual Junior Judging Contest.

Taking top honors and a \$1,500 scholarship provided by the National Buffalo Foundation was Cassidy Wallace, Canyon, Tex., a student at West Texas A & M and a member of the college’s herdsman program. Her score was 226 points. Wallace also was a member of the second-place team.

Placing second in individual standings with 223 points was Aubry Hensley, a member of Blanchard FFA in Blanchard, Okla. She receives a \$1,200 scholarship, sponsored by Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association. Placing third with 220 points and a \$900 scholarship from Rocky Mountain Natural Meats, was Stephanie Connelly, from Northeastern Jr. College, Sterling, Colo. Connelly also was a member of the first-place team.

The first place-team with a total score of 644 was from Northeastern Jr. College, and team members included Connelly as well as Kylie Poole and Tiffaney Connelly. The second-place team, scoring a total of 668.5 points was from West Texas A & M and included Wallace as well as Madison Looney, Paul Salado and Laura Corder. In third place as a team was Brewster FFA, Brewster, Kan., with a total team score of 613. Team members included Austin Bear, Samantha Cozza, Colten Palmer and Ryan Hause.

Top placers in the 13 and younger division were Taber Cammack, Stoneville, S.D., first; Gunner Klingler, Kamas, Utah, second; and Grace Klingler, also from Kamas, Utah, third.

“The judging ability and quality of reasons continues to develop as this national contest grows,” said Dave Carter, NBA executive director. “The growing interest also is a reflection of the increased attention by producers and potential producers in raising bison as a career.”

The NBA’s Junior Judging program is based on criteria used in 4-H and FFA livestock judging contests. The bison judging program was started by NBA member and Stratford, Okla.,

veterinarian Dr. Gerald Parsons. He is the administrator of the NBA's National Jr. Judging Contest.

"The level of interest and the quality of junior judges in this contest bodes well for the continued growth of the U.S. bison industry," Parsons said. "We are glad to see young people interested in this business and learning about bison."

The contest was held at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS), Denver, Colo., in conjunction with the 2018 NBA Gold Trophy Show & Sale. Contestants judged four classes: yearling heifers, bull calves, two-year-old breeding bulls and heifer calves, and gave reasons on the two-year-old breeding bull class. Each animal class and the reasons class had a total possible point value of 50, making 250 total points a perfect score. Team scores are calculated using the top three individual scores.

The NBA offers a junior membership, which provides young people 21 and younger with the same benefits as its producer members, but for a discounted rate of \$50 annually.

NBA Requests Adjustment in Indemnity Levels for 2017

The National Bison Association this week sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, requesting that the agency adjust the payment rates for producers who filed for compensation under the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) for losses incurred in 2017.

The letter to the Secretary was the latest step in a series of developments that arose last October, when the association was contacted by an Iowa rancher who had filed for compensation under LIP and was shocked by the low values that the agency had ascribed to bison. Under the LIP rules, producers filing qualified losses are to be compensated at 75 percent of the current value of those animals. However, LIP's compensation rates for 2017 value bison calves under 400 lbs. at \$447.66 and calves over 400 lbs. at \$607.56. Yearling bison were compensated at \$951.06, and adult cows were compensated at \$914.34.

NBA Executive Director contacted Acting FSA Director Chris Byerhelm to request that the rates be adjusted. That request included information documenting the actual value of live bison in 2017.

That led to a series of communications, and ultimately to a commitment by the agency to adjust the rates for 2018 and future years to reflect actual market values for bison. However, this correction did not address the deficiencies for producers filing for losses in 2017.

The 2017 compensation rates became more of an issue because of losses incurred by bison producers in the Black Hills of South Dakota during the Legion Lake Wild Land Fire in December. Carter met with FSA officials in Washington, D.C. in January to request that the adjustments be made retroactive to 2017 and was informed that the agency did not "normally make those kinds of adjustments."

Accordingly, the NBA Board adopted the following resolution during its January 16th meeting:

Whereas the USDA Livestock Indemnity program is an important risk management tool for the U.S. livestock business; and

Whereas, the rates for 2017 and the immediate prior years have been found to be as much as two-thirds below the 75 percent of market value for bison; and

Whereas the USDA Farm Service Agency is developing a model to more accurately reflect the fair and just compensation rates for bison, and that this model identifies those rates for calendar year 2017; and

Whereas bison producers in South Dakota and elsewhere have incurred significant death losses in Calendar Year 2017;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Directors of the National Bison Association request the Secretary of Agriculture to use his administrative authority to provide LIP compensation for bison producers suffering losses in 2017 under the rates that were determined under the new model developed by the Farm Service Agency.

The resolution was sent to Secretary Perdue in a letter this week.

Clip of TV Anchor Laughing Over "Bison Hump Day" Goes Viral

When the idea of describing last Wednesday as Bison Hump Day tickled the funny bone of Molly Hendrickson, a news anchor for Denver's ABC-affiliate 7News, her reaction went viral across the internet.

While reading a National Bison Association news briefing regarding activities at the Gold Trophy Show and the NBA annual meeting last week, she broke into laughter, and couldn't stop. Hendrickson did her best to explain that the event highlighted efforts to boost the bison population, but giggles got the best of her.

"I'm done," she finally said.

Apparently, Hendrickson never had a chance. "And they thought I could hold it together??" she wrote on Instagram Thursday.

Before the week was out, the clip of her reaction had swept across the internet, including Huffington Post, and the Daily Mail in the United Kingdom.

You'll get a chuckle, too. Watch here: <https://woai.iheart.com/content/2018-01-22-a-tv-anchor-cant-stop-laughing-over-bison-hump-day/>



FREE - Bison Advantage Workshop - Feb. 2nd - 1 p.m.

BLACK HILLS STOCK SHOW
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE NATIONAL AND
DAKOTA TERRITORY BUFFALO ASSOCIATIONS

Ranchers to talk advantages of raising bison

(From FarmTalk)

There's apparently no better time than now to get into the bison business. The price of bison meat is on the rise at the same time that beef prices are in a slump, according to the National Bison Association.

Bison are relatively simple to raise, lead long productive lives and thrive in most North American landscapes, says the Colorado-based nonprofit association of bison industry insiders and supporters.

The group touts this as the "Bison Advantage," the theme of a talk it's sponsoring at the Black Hills Stock Show on Feb. 2, 1 p.m.

It includes the following points:

- Bison don't require artificial shelters like barns, since the animals prefer to be outdoors year-round, no matter the weather;
- Bison largely calve on their own;
- Bison don't require human assistance.

They feed on grasses that are native to the U.S. and are economic foragers. Their grazing practices contribute to maintaining ecological balance.

Bison are very resistant to disease, which means lower veterinary bills. Federal regulations prohibit the use of artificial growth hormones in bison, and the industry limits the use of antibiotics to amounts needed to treat illnesses.

And at a time when consumers are looking for healthier and more sustainable products, bison meat offers an attractive option.

“Our prices are considered to be very strong, and that’s essentially a result of consumer demand for bison meat that’s not being met,” said Jim Matheson, the National Bison Association’s assistant director. Bison carcass currently fetches about \$5 a pound compared with \$1.75 for beef carcass, he said.

“We’re in a very good position, which is enviable in the agriculture world today,” said Matheson, who will be discussing the “bison advantage” at the stock show. It apparently is the first time the talk will be presented at the event.

Read more.

http://www.farmtalknewspaper.com/news/national_news/ranchers-to-talk-advantages-of-raising-bison/article_9e809e8a-c88f-5b4e-8c97-c94422930a3f.html

Wholesale Prices Strong, Slaughter Down at Year End

Wholesale prices paid for market-ready bison remained strong as 2017 ended, but the overall number of animals processed during the year was down by nearly seven percent from 2016, according to the latest information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The wholesale price report released by USDA’s Market News Service this month pegs the price of market ready young bison bulls at \$481.16/cwt., which is two cents higher than the previous month, but \$0.88/cwt lower than in December 2016. Market-ready heifers averaged \$471.95/cwt. In December, which was \$4.03/cwt. Higher than in November, but \$3.47 below November 2016. Old Bulls were down slightly in December, but old cows were higher.

Separate reports issued by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service showed that the overall slaughter in both federal and state inspected plants totaled 57,423 animals in 2017. This is a 5.8 percent drop from the 60,958 bison processed the previous year. Declines in state-inspected slaughter accounted for 79 percent of that drop.

Bulls accounted for 58 percent of the young animals processed in 2017, compared to an average of 60 percent over the previous seven years.

Rebellious Cow Finds Winter Home Among Polish Bison

(From NPR)

The Bialowieza Forest, which spans 350,000 acres between Poland and Belarus, is home to a vulnerable population of about 600 bison. But this winter, the forest also became home to a reddish-brown cow who decided to escape domestic life for some time in the wild. Poland's [TVN24 news portal](#) reports an ornithologist first spotted her in November, wandering the outskirts of the forest with a herd of about 50 bison.

This week, Rafal Kowalczyk, a bison expert and director of the Mammal Research Institute at the Polish Academy of Sciences, spotted the cow again. He told TVN24 that she appears healthy. She is a Limousin cow, which means she has thick fur, and eastern Poland has had a relatively mild winter. He also says the bison herd she is traveling with appears to be doing a good job of finding nutrient-rich food like corn.

"This isn't the first time in this region that a cow has escaped, but it's the first time that a cow has joined a herd of bison," Kowalczyk told TVN24. "With the bison, it's safe from wolves. If it was on its own, it would likely fall victim to wolves."

Though she is healthy now, Kowalczyk [warned The Associated Press](#) that if she were to successfully mate with a bison, the hybrid calf could be too large for her to deliver safely. Mating could also contaminate the endangered bison population's gene pool. In 1927, no European bison remained in the wild, and 54 remained in captivity. But the species, which goes by the scientific name *Bison bonasus*, has begun to recover: According to the European Bison Conservation Center, [the total number of European bison had risen to 6,083 individuals by the end of 2015](#).

To prevent the risk of mating, the cow will need to be taken away from the bison population by this summer. In the meantime, Bialowieza Forest has other concerns: In November 2017, the European Court of Justice [ordered that Poland cease illegal forest management activities there](#) or face daily penalties of at least 100,000 euros (\$125,000).

Read more. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/25/580746379/rebellious-cow-finds-winter-home-among-polish-bison>

'A Sense of Loss': Search for Missing Yellowstone Bison Continues

(From Montana Public Radio)

The search continues for dozens of bison reported missing from two holding pens at Yellowstone National Park. Authorities say the animals escaped when somebody used bolt cutters to open up a fence. Park officials are calling the incident a crime. It's a windy and unseasonably warm winter day in Yellowstone National Park in Montana. Spokesperson Morgan Warthin is standing in the middle of a massive, empty valley.

"Yellowstone is like, so big," she says. "Where do you begin to look?"

Warthin is searching for bison that were set free last week. That's when they discovered the holding pens had been sabotaged by an unidentified person or group of people.

Now the bison are scattered across an area larger than Delaware and park officials have launched a criminal investigation to find out what happened.

"I didn't believe it when I was first told," says park bison biologist Rick Wallen.

Finding these animals won't be easy, he says, because there are thousands of bison in Yellowstone.

The only thing that sets the escaped animals apart is a tiny ear tag which can be hard to spot from long distances.

"Bison, in the winter time, are incredibly furry animals," says Warthin. "And so the fur, being so thick, covers up those tags. So, it can be difficult to see the tag"

Before the bison went missing, Yellowstone park officials hoped to send them to nearby Fort Peck Indian reservation in Montana.

It was part of an effort to help the animals avoid what's become an annual and controversial slaughter of bison in Yellowstone.

Some ranchers in Montana worry if bison leave the park, they'll infect cattle with a deadly disease called brucellosis. It can cause pregnant cows to abort their young.

While there's never been a confirmed case of bison infecting cattle in the wild, ranching is big business in Big Sky country.

"There was a great deal of fear that brucellosis infection in wild bison would create an epidemic infection in the cattle of Montana," Wallen says.

Read more. <http://mtpr.org/post/sense-loss-search-missing-yellowstone-bison-continues>

Wanted: 52 Bull Bison

(From The Bozeman Daily Chronicle)

Call the Hardy boys. It's the case of the missing buffalo.

Officials in Yellowstone National Park have opened a criminal investigation after someone cut a fence at the Stephens Creek quarantine facility releasing 52 bull bison back into the wild.

The bison were being tested for brucellosis before being donated to Indian tribes in Montana. Some of the bulls had been in the facility for nearly two years.

The park doesn't have a clue. Whoever used bolt cutters to free the bulls last week is long gone. So are the bison.

Since they began searching Jan. 16, park rangers have only found one.

Now I realize the brief government shutdown hampered efforts to locate the missing animals, but what about those first few days when the trail was fresh? How hard can it be to follow the tracks of 52 adult bison that weigh upwards of a ton?

Impossible, it appears.

The one bull was discovered at park headquarters in Mammoth, about 10 miles up the valley from Stephens Creek. He was easily identified by the ear tag he and his fellow escapees are wearing.

I suspect the others followed suit and returned to the park where thousands of their ilk are spending the winter.

And why not? The valley downstream narrows into Yankee Jim Canyon. The country to the south rises steeply and is thickly timbered. The Yellowstone River and Highway 89 to the north, while not exactly barriers, would certainly slow down the herd had it fled that way.

Read more.

https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/opinions/chronicle_columnists/parker_heinlein/wanted-bull-bison/article_7a314af4-b447-5f2c-9ee3-78746a56e047.html

This Ice Skating Bison Proves That Bison Are Not Good at Ice Skating

(From SB Nation)

Honestly, I'm getting so sick of people coming up to me every day and saying "Bison are so graceful," and I'm like "They're really not, though," and they're like, "Yes they are. They're amazing at ice skating and stuff." It's a ridiculous lie we've been perpetuating for too long.

Look, I know bison have specific skills and we should embrace those. They are big and majestic and when in a group they make a really good stampede. But they're just not good at ice skating, and I think that's OK. Humans are really bad at stampeding. The only time humans are good at stampeding is on Black Friday, and the rest of the time we slap numbers on them and call it a "marathon."

No bison should be selected for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. Except maybe in the bobsled because four bison in a bobsled would be fast as hell.

See the video here.

<https://www.sbnation.com/lookit/2018/1/18/16906480/ice-skating-bison-video>

Conservation Stewardship Program Signup Cutoff for 2018 is March 2

Producers have until March 2, 2018, to submit an application for the Conservation Stewardship Program in 2018. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) reports that NRCS will enroll an additional 10 million acres of cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and forestland in CSP for the 2018 signup period.

Producers initiate the application process by submitting a basic form to their local NRCS office. Later, applications are scored for their conservation level and then ranked for funding. Although applications are accepted year-round, those submitted after March 2, 2018, will not be considered for funding in 2018.

NSAC notes that this year is the final signup under the 2014 Farm Bill. NSAC offers an online publication, *Farmers Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program* that provides guidance in how to enroll in the program.

Read more. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-csp-signup-opens/>

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest \$250 million in technical and financial assistance in 2018 to help private landowners, tribes, land trusts, and other groups protect critical wetlands, agricultural lands, and grasslands through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

Through wetland reserve easements, NRCS helps landowners and tribes restore and protect wetland ecosystems permanently or for 30 years. Through agricultural land easements, NRCS provides funds to conservation partners to purchase permanent conservation easements on private working lands. This program helps keep working lands working, especially in areas experiencing development pressure. The cooperating entity applies for matching funds from NRCS for the purchase of an easement from the landowner, permanently protecting its agricultural use and conservation values. Landowners do not apply directly to NRCS for funding under this program.

Applications for ACEP are taken on a continuous basis; however, 2018 consideration cutoff dates vary by state. Many occur during December, January, and February.

Read more.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/>

Perdue Announces USDA's Farm Bill and Legislative Principles for 2018

(From USDA Office of Communications Bulletin)

Mifflintown, PA - U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Bill and Legislative Principles for 2018 during a town hall at Reinford Farms in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania.

"Since my first day as the Secretary of Agriculture, I've traveled to 30 states, listening to the people of American agriculture about what is working and what is not. The conversations we had and the people we came across helped us craft USDA's Farm Bill and Legislative Principles for 2018," said Secretary Perdue. "These principles will be used as a road map - they are our way of letting Congress know what we've heard from the hard-working men and women of American agriculture. While we understand it's the legislature's job to write the Farm Bill, USDA will be right there providing whatever counsel Congress may request or require."

Download USDA's 2018 Farm Bill and Legislative Principles:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018-farm-bill-and-legislative-principles.pdf>

Full text: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOC/bulletins/1d58871>

New York New Farmers Grant Fund

New York's \$1 million New Farmers Grant Fund will provide grants of up to \$50,000 to assist with up to 50% of eligible project costs. To qualify, all farm business owners must be within the first ten years of having an ownership interest in any farm business, and the farm must have a minimum of \$10,000 in income from sales of products grown or raised on the farm. Eligible project costs include the purchase of machinery, equipment, supplies, and the construction or improvement of agricultural structures.

Applications are due January 26, 2018.

Read more. <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-more-12-million-farm-funding-available-support-new-farmers-and>

Got a Home for the Buffalo to Roam? Now is the Time to Ante Up.

(From the Paducah Sun)

It's almost buffalo bidding time in the Land Between the Lakes.

An annual auction of surplus bison -- animals from the Elk & Bison Prairie and the South Bison Range -- will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, at the South Bison Range corral on the west side of The Trace south of the Kentucky-Tennessee line and almost across from the Homeplace 1850 living history farm.

What's a surplus bison? That's a critter that makes a confined population too large for the habitat in which it is confined. Up for sale next Saturday will be 48 bison that represent the combined number over and above what is deemed to be the ideal population the habitats can support at the two LBL bison enclosures.

They are big enclosures. For instance, the Elk & Bison Prairie is 700 acres. But the reality is that the habitat has limitations on how many animals it can support in a healthy manner. And an ongoing element is that the resident bison keep doing what bison do, which is making more bison.

U.S. Forest Service biologists assess results of natural reproduction each year and gauge which animals are best suited for auction -- that is, what mix of animals should be left after auction to provide age- and gender-balanced herds.

Those bison designated for sale this time represent seven cows born between 2004 and 2005; three cows born in 2009, 2010 and 2015; two large bulls born in 2015; eight yearling bulls (born in 2016), 10 yearling heifers; and a mix of 18 bull and heifer calves born during 2017.

On next Saturday's sale day, bidder registration and viewing of the critters for sale begin at 8 a.m. The bison will go to the highest bidders, with purchases to be made at the time of bid acceptance via cash, credit card or personal check.

And that determines who can buy LBL surplus bison: Any high bidder who has the means to pay that sum. But you better have a place for the animal or animals, and buyers are responsible for knowing state import regulations for the home state before bringing bison back.

All the sale bison will be tested for brucellosis and tuberculosis before the auction. An on-site veterinarian will issue certificates of veterinary inspection as required for interstate transport. And import permits will be on hand, as required, for bison that might be bound for new homes in Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Alabama and North Carolina.

Veterinary services on site can provide additional shots for critters that are going to states that require them.

Read more.

http://www.paducahsun.com/sports/local/got-a-home-where-buffalo-could-roam-now-s-the/article_1e76cb6e-5bef-59d5-bcbb-42de34d0654a.html

SCOTUS Decision on WOTUS Delivers Uncertainty

(From AgriPulse)

Current and future court challenges to the “waters of the U.S.” rule must be heard in federal district courts, not circuit courts of appeals, the Supreme Court said Monday in a unanimous decision that ultimately could lead to lawsuits filed all over the country.

The court did not buy the [arguments](#) of the federal government, most environmental groups and some states that federal appeals courts are the proper venue for litigation over the rule, which has been blasted by the vast majority of farm groups as overly broad but supported by conservation groups that say it strikes the proper regulatory balance.

The [decision](#) sets up a battle in the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals over a nationwide stay of the WOTUS rule that the court issued in October 2015. Because the Supreme Court said that jurisdiction for WOTUS litigation lies in the district court, that means the 6th Circuit will almost certainly have to dissolve its stay when the Supreme Court decision is formally sent back to the appeals court.

“This Supreme Court decision brings greater clarity to an important issue that has bogged down the litigation over this and other Clean Water Act regulations for years,” said American Farm Bureau Federation counsel Ellen Steen in a [news release](#). “That is a positive result, but it also creates uncertainty and confusion in the short term, because the 6th Circuit must soon lift its nationwide stay of the 2015 rule.”

Steen pointed out that EPA has yet to finalize [two rules](#): one to delay the effective date of the WOTUS rule for two years, the other to rescind the rule entirely. The Supreme Court’s decision is likely to lead publication of one or both of those rules relatively soon.

EPA says there's no reason to be concerned.

“The Trump administration’s stay of the 2015 WOTUS rule will very likely be complete before any change in court jurisdiction can be finalized, or the Obama administration’s overreaching definition of WOTUS can be implemented,” EPA spokesperson Liz Bowman said in a statement. And EPA Office of Water Administrator David Ross told Politico that he expected the “delay” rule would be finalized within a month.

There may nonetheless be a fight over the 6th Circuit’s stay of WOTUS. Even though many of those challenging the rule argued in favor of district court jurisdiction, they don’t want to see the nationwide injunction disappear, either.

Scott Yager, environmental counsel at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, said NCBA will be discussing its next move with litigation counsel, but that it may oppose dissolving the 6th Circuit’s stay.

However, former Justice Department attorney Stephen Samuels, who spent decades working on Clean Water Act issues, said the Supreme Court decision makes it “pretty clear that (the 6th Circuit) doesn’t have jurisdiction to issue a stay of the Clean Water Rule.”

Decisive Round of NAFTA Talks to Begin This Week

(From Meetingplace.com)

The United States, Canada and Mexico will begin Tuesday in Montreal a sixth round of talks aimed at renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement as President Donald Trump issued a fresh threat to scrap the deal altogether and elections here and abroad approach.

Observers are calling the sixth of seven scheduled NAFTA rounds crucial to the potential success of the renegotiation because major issues, such as U.S. demands on autos and a five-year sunset clause, remain unsettled as the effort nears its end. Talks are supposed to conclude by the end of March to avoid conflict with Mexico’s general elections. Meanwhile, U.S. midterm elections take place this fall.

In an [interview with Reuters](#) last week, Trump, who campaigned partly on dismantling what he called bad trade deals, was quoted as saying, “A lot of people don’t realize how good it would be to terminate NAFTA because the way you’re going to make the best deal is to terminate NAFTA.”

However, in other interviews Trump also has said he might extend the deadline for talks in light of Mexico’s elections. And in the Reuters interview last week, he acknowledged how unpopular a decision to withdraw from NAFTA might be with “a lot of people.” Among those are agricultural leaders and industry groups. For example, Quebec’s largest agri-food cooperative, La Coop Fédérée, warned on Friday that abandoning NAFTA would cut Canadian Gross Domestic Product by between C\$4.6 billion and C\$6.3 billion and threaten between 58,000 and 80,000 jobs in Canada.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has urged the president not to withdraw from the pact, pointing out how fruitful the 24-year-old pact has been for his constituency, including the meat and poultry industries. Perdue said, also in an interview last week, that the president has come to learn that NAFTA has benefits for the United States.

Canadian and Mexican leaders, meanwhile, are said to be entering the sixth round of talks with open minds and some willingness to soften on some of the sticking points.

Farm Ministers Call for More Welfare for Animals

(From Reuters)

Greater attention should be given worldwide to the welfare of farm animals and to reducing the use of growth-enhancing medications, agriculture ministers from about 70 countries meeting in Berlin said on Saturday.

There is a global need to improve animal health and animal welfare by promoting good animal husbandry management practices, biosecurity and biosafety and knowledge exchange, said a communique after the 10th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference.

The ministers said more international cooperation is necessary “in order to make livestock production and animal husbandry more sustainable, responsible and efficient”.

There is also a requirement to bring livestock breeding and husbandry further into line with consumers' expectations of humane care of farm animals.

“We note that the demand for food of animal origin, in particular food derived from meat, milk and eggs, is projected to rise significantly in many regions of the world due to the growing population, increasing purchasing power and changes in consumer behaviour,” the communique said.

“At the same time, consumers are increasingly calling for livestock production to be made more sustainable and more respectful of animal welfare.”

Ministers undertook to give greater consideration to animal health and animal welfare in training programs.

A balanced consumption of meat is needed for a healthy diet, health protection and the efficient use of resources, they said.

Full story: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-agriculture-livestock-welfare/farm-ministers-call-for-more-welfare-for-animals-idUSKBN1F90QW>