



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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March 16, 2018

NBA to Request Labeling Change in Pet Food

Prompted by a growing trend among pet food companies to mislead consumers with products formulated with water buffalo, the National Bison Association Board of Directors last night voted to formally request that those products be required to use the term “water buffalo,” rather than “buffalo.”

Demand for bison ingredients in pet food has skyrocketed in recent years, as specialty brands search for ways to differentiate their products from the mainstream foods and treats. However, a growing number of companies are marketing recipes labeled as containing buffalo, but implying that the ingredient is American bison.

In a resolution adopted during the regularly scheduled board meeting last night, the NBA directors voted to request that the Pet Food Committee of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) adopt new language that would prevent misleading labeling.

AAFCO does not have any formal regulatory authority but develops “model” regulations which are generally adopted by the FDA and state departments of agriculture.

The board-adopted resolution requests that any pet food labeled as containing buffalo be restricted to bison. Any pet food containing water buffalo should be required to label that ingredient as “water buffalo.”

The NBA will be coordinating with state/regional bison associations to encourage those groups to contact the individual AAFCO Pet Food Committee members in their region with a request to support the NBA recommendation.

NBA Support Effort to Require “Meat” and “Beef” to Describe Products from Animals

The National Bison Association Board of Directors last night voted unanimously to support a recently-filed petition to direct the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service to limit the terms “meat” and “beef” to products that are derived from animals raised for slaughter.

As A growing number of companies are developing and marketing burgers and other products resembling meat, but which are comprised solely of non-animal ingredients.

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) last month filed a 15-page petition to the FSIS stating, in part, "[The government] should require that any product labeled as 'beef' come from cattle that have been born, raised, and harvested in the traditional manner, rather than coming from alternative sources such as a synthetic product from plant, insects, or other non-animal components and any product grown in labs from animal cells."

Veggie burgers have been around for decades, but scientists in recent years have been conducting research in new ways to replicate the taste and texture of meat through the genetic engineering of plant materials such as green algae, corn and soy protein isolate. Some traditional meat companies—including Tyson Foods—have invested in the development of these new products.

The NBA board last night voted to join a growing number of livestock organizations to prohibit those products from being labels as meat or beef.

Wholesale Prices Edge Up for Young Bison, Slip for Older Animals

Wholesale prices paid on market-ready bison carcasses edged higher for young stock in February, but fell for older animals, according to the latest monthly market report released this week by USDA's Grain and Livestock Market News Service.

Dressed young bull carcasses averaged \$466.73/cwt in February, which was \$2.75 higher than in January, but \$2.85 lower than in February 2017. Dressed heifer carcasses averaged \$471.49/cwt. Which was \$0.90 higher than in January and \$5.01/cwt higher than in February 2017. Older bull and cow carcasses brought lower prices in February.

Year-to-date, 6937 bison have been processed under federal inspection. That's 1,020 fewer head than during the same period last year, and the lowest YTD slaughter figure since 2013. Young bulls represented 60 percent of the younger animals processed during the first two months of 2018. That compares to an average of 52 percent for the previous nine years.

The USDA price report is available here:
https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls526.txt

The NBA five-year tracking report is available in the members section at www.bisoncentral.com, or just follow this link: <https://bisoncentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Meat2.18.pdf>.

Updated live bison auction results available here: <https://bisoncentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Sales3.15.18.pdf>

A bit of a Spring Break at NBA Office

Just a head's up to NBA members...please understand that the NBA office may be a bit short-handed over the next few weeks as the staff takes some "spring break" time during the normally slow time between winter and summer conference.

“This is the time of year that allows us to take a quick breather in our schedule,” said Dave Carter, NBA executive director “Because of our small staff, though, members notice a difference when we are out of the office. We want everyone to know that we will be a bit short-handed over the next few weeks as we take time to rejuvenate and recharge.”

Exhibit in Billings Shows the History of Bison

(From The Billings Gazette)

America has had a complicated relationship with bison. Nowhere is that more evident than in a display at the Western Heritage Center, showing through April 7.

“Bison: The Past, Present & Future” takes visitors on an informative stroll through the animal’s long history that at times can be unsettling. Here was an animal that once blackened the Great Plains in numbers almost unimaginable, herds so large they reportedly drank streams dry. For centuries bison were like roving Walmart stores for many American Indian tribes, providing food, shelter, clothing, utensils and intricate rituals, stories and songs.

But in a matter of decades the shaggy animals with massive heads were nearly wiped out by Euro-Americans who sought to profit from the bison’s hides, while also starving an entire race of ancient nomads into submission and eventually moving them onto reservations.

“When I went into business (asa bison hunter), I sat down and figured that I was indeed one of fortune’s children,” bison hunter Frank Mayer is quoted as saying in one of the displays. “Just think! There were 20 million bison ... I could kill 100 a day ... that would be \$6,000 a month — or three times what was paid to the President of the United States ...”

In 1880, according to the display, one county in Montana shipped more than 180,000 bison skins. Seven years later, an American Museum of Natural History expedition sent to Montana to obtain bison found none.

The animals were doomed by the arrival of the railroad, which sped hunters and the bison’s hides to markets back East while also feeding the crews laying track. A changing climate led to a dryer landscape, forcing bison to move longer distances. Introduced domestic cattle and sheep competed for grass. Eventually, immigrants moved west to settle on and farm the grasslands. It was a perfect storm of events that devastated a once-widespread wildlife species.

Read more. http://billingsgazette.com/news/local/exhibit-in-billings-shows-the-history-of-bison/article_c98cbe25-f4fc-58c6-ad9d-b47bf4304aea.html

Freedom-Loving Cow No Longer Roaming with Bison in Poland

(From The Japan Times)

A Polish scientist says a cow that drew international headlines while roaming free much of the winter with a herd of bison in eastern Poland has apparently been captured and removed from the herd.

The reddish brown, freedom-loving cow had been spotted in January following bison across fields bordering the Bialowieza Forest.

Rafal Kowalczyk, a bison expert with the Polish Academy of Sciences who photographed the unusual sight, said Wednesday that he knows from witnesses that the cow was immobilized and captured some weeks ago, apparently by a farmer.

Previously, Kowalczyk had described the case as exceptional but risky. Mating would have been dangerous to the cow if she gave birth to a large hybrid calf, and also bad for the gene pool of Poland's endangered bison population.

Source. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/15/world/offbeat-world/freedom-loving-cow-no-longer-roaming-bison-poland/#.Wqrf1-dMHb0>

Best Bison Making Debut in Omaha

(From Fast Casual)

Best Bison, a new fast casual concept opening next month in Omaha, is hosting a job fair from 1 to 4 p.m., today at the Ralston Arena, 7300 Q St., in Omaha.

Best Bison will fill 10 front-of-house and back-of-house openings for its debut restaurant to be located at 163 N. 78th St., according to a company press release.

"We are extremely excited about the opening of Best Bison and what we will bring to the Omaha community. In addition to serving delicious food, we are focused on providing unique customer experiences and creating a rewarding workplace with a variety of opportunities to turn great jobs into even better careers," Chief Operating Office Michael Blatchford, said in the release.

Best Bison will serve made-to-order bison menu items with no hormones and no antibiotics.

Source. <https://www.fastcasual.com/news/best-bison-making-debut-in-omaha/>

3 Men Plead Guilty to Illegal Hunting of Bull Bison

(From The Great Falls Tribune)

BOZEMAN—Three men have pleaded guilty to the illegal hunting and wasting of bull bison north of Yellowstone Park.

The Bozeman Daily Chronicle reports that Jesse Darr, Ryley Heidt and Peyton Simmons, all of Park County, were sentenced in justice court Tuesday for unlawful possession.

Each was ordered to pay fines and charges totaling \$2,605 and each will lose hunting and fishing privileges for four and a half years.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks wardens found three dead bison on March 2 in Beattie Gulch, a strip of Forest Service land near the Yellowstone border.

The heads of the three bison were each removed and usable meat was left to waste. The skulls were skinned and hidden nearby.

The men were linked to the kills with help from a dog.

Source. <https://www.greatfallsribune.com/story/news/2018/03/14/3-men-plead-guilty-illegal-hunting-bull-bison/423544002/>

Where to See Bison in the Wild

(From the Travel Channel)

Ever dreamt of spending an afternoon where the buffalo roam?

You're in luck. There hasn't been a better time to see our national mammal in the wild in a hundred years. The bison, a.k.a. buffalo, is back from the brink of extinction — and thriving, in fact. Most bison today live on commercial ranches, where they're raised for burgers and steaks, but the country is dotted with free-roaming wild herds descended from the few hundred lucky animals who survived the mass slaughter of the nineteenth century.

Bison ranged from northern Mexico to northern Canada in their pre-1800s heyday, and from Oregon in the west to New York in the east — but today, the bison heartland overlays eastern Montana and the western Dakotas.

It includes the only place in the continental United States where bison have been grazing uninterrupted since prehistoric times: [Yellowstone National Park](#), home to a herd of almost 5,000. Bring your camera and your patience to Yellowstone, because you're likely to see astonishing numbers of bison — while contending with astonishing numbers of tourists if you visit in the summer. It's worth the trouble, at least once. For best results year-round, head to the park's Hayden and Lamar valleys. (In the winter, you might also have luck around warm hydrothermal features.)

Full story: <https://www.travelchannel.com/interests/outdoors-and-adventure/articles/where-to-see-bison-in-the-wild>

Political Feud Stalls Farm Bill

(From AgriPulse)

Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee are rebelling against Chairman Mike Conaway's draft farm bill over provisions that would tighten work requirements on able-bodied adults who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The opposition, which developed out of a briefing this week attended by Conaway and the committee's ranking Democrat, Collin Peterson of Minnesota, could force the chairman to delay a planned markup of the bill planned for the week after next.

Peterson "has seen the nutrition title and can't support it," said Liz Friedlander, a spokeswoman for committee Democrats. She said, however, that there were ongoing discussions with the Republican side.

Conaway said in a statement Friday that he still wanted the bill to have bipartisan support.

"I have worked with Collin every step of the way on the farm bill draft that our staffs have developed together. I'm proud of the work we've done," he said.

"I have always intended and continue to hope that this farm bill will be a bipartisan bill. There is no reason that it should not be and every reason it should. Our farmers and ranchers are hurting."

In an interview with Mike Adams of American Ag Network, Peterson said the bill "hit an impasse" at Wednesday night's briefing for committee Democrats when they learned about the details of the bill's nutrition title.

"My side is in revolt," said Peterson. "There will not be one single vote in committee for this bill if what they have currently in the bill is in there."

Peterson said Republicans "want to take 8 million people off the rolls," about 20 percent of SNAP participation, and give the savings "to the states to create a job training bureaucracy."

Under current law, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) ages 18 to 49 generally must work at least 20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits. They can be out of work no more than three months out of every three years unless their state or area has a waiver for USDA because of high unemployment or job scarcity.

A source knowledgeable about the bill said the bill would tighten the waiver rules and increase the number of able-bodied adults subject to the work requirement to include adults with children above the age of 12. Peterson said the age limit would be raised to 65, under the draft bill. The source said that was still subject to negotiation. The savings from tightening the work requirements would be used to expand state employment and training programs.

The source also said that Peterson was given the text of the nutrition title in February and knew about the proposals that would be in it before that.

Yellowstone Bison Protesters Plead Guilty to Charges

(From The Yellowstone Insider)

The three bison protesters arrested last week have all entered guilty pleas for misdemeanors incurred at Stephens Creek in Yellowstone National Park.

According to a Department of Justice press release, the three (Cody J. Cyson, Thomas L. Brown and Hanna F. Ponder) entered their pleas at the Yellowstone Justice Center in Mammoth, Wyoming.

The trio spent a week in jail leading up to their detention hearing.

Last week, we reported a pair of protesters (Brown and Cyson) had chained themselves to the squeeze chute at Stephens Creek, where biologists take blood samples of bison in preparation for their shipment to slaughter. The pair were arrested on the scene. Ponder was arrested later when she was seen running from the facility.

The trio belong to Wild Bison Defense, a bison advocacy group that seeks to highlight living conditions for bison in Yellowstone and protest their treatment. Brown previously volunteered with another bison advocacy group, Buffalo Field Campaign, which issued a statement of solidarity with Brown and Wild Bison Defense.

According to the release, all three received a sentence of six days in jail with credit for time served. Cyson and Brown were charged a \$250 fine for "entering a closed area" and an additional \$250 fine for "interference with an agency function." Ponder was fined \$500 for entering the facility through the Reese Creek drainage.

All three were also charged a \$500 community service payment; Brown and Cyson were charged an additional \$50 in special assessment while Ponder was charged \$40.

All three are banned from Yellowstone National Park for five years, with five years of unsupervised probation.

Full text:

<https://yellowstoneinsider.com/2018/03/12/yellowstone-bison-protesters-plead-guilty-charges/>

More Than 550 Yellowstone Bison Culled

(From The Bozeman Daily Chronicle)

More than 550 bison have been killed through hunting and ship-to-slaughter so far this winter and bison managers seem assured to reach the cull goal for the year.

Yellowstone National Park biologist Rick Wallen said Friday afternoon that 328 bison have been shipped to slaughter so far. According to a report from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, hunters have killed another 234, bringing the overall total near the lower end of bison managers' removal target of between 600 and 900 animals.

"This is the kind of year where we can actually make some progress at the objectives that were set forth," Wallen said.

Hunting and slaughter take place each year as part of a multi-agency agreement that calls for a bison population of about 3,000. More than 1,200 bison were killed last year, the largest number in a decade.

Prior to this year's cull, park biologists estimated there were about 4,800 bison in the park. Removing 600 would keep the population near stable, while 900 would result in a more significant decrease.

Hunters licensed through six tribal nations and the state of Montana take aim at bison each year. The largest share of those have been taken by the Nez Perce Tribe, which has harvested nearly 80 bison.

Hunters licensed through Montana took 46 bison.

Most hunting seasons have closed. The Nez Perce Tribe's season closes March 18. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation hunting season closes March 17.

Wallen said there were roughly 750 bison in the park's Stephens Creek Capture Facility on Friday. He said managers of the facility were authorized to continue capturing through the weekend. Meat from slaughtered bison is distributed to Native American tribes.

The park will hold back 98 bison for a potential brucellosis quarantine operation, Wallen said. Quarantining bison would certify them as free of the disease, which can cause animals to abort and is feared by the livestock industry. Disease-free bison could be used to create new wild herds or augment existing ones.

Read more. https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/environment/more-than-yellowstone-bison-culled/article_1c930fef-7594-5915-8134-e17dc26441de.html

Secretary Perdue Statement on Extension of Agriculture Exemption from ELD Mandate

(USDA Office of Communications Bulletin)

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today applauded Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao for her announcement of an additional 90-day extension of the agriculture exemption from the Electronic Logging Device (ELD) mandate. Agricultural compliance with the mandate would have been problematic for the agriculture industry because the devices do not accurately account for the agricultural exemptions currently provided in the law.

The ELD rule went into effect in December 2017, with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) granting the agriculture industry an initial exemption that was set to expire on March 18, 2018.

With the granting of another extension, the agriculture industry will now have additional time to comply.

Secretary Sonny Perdue issued the following statement:

"The ELD mandate imposes restrictions upon the agriculture industry that lack flexibility necessary for the unique realities of hauling agriculture commodities. If the agriculture industry had been forced to comply by the March 18 deadline, live agricultural commodities, including plants and animals, would have been at risk of perishing before they reached their destination. The 90-day extension is critical to give DOT additional time to issue guidance on hours-of-service and other ELD exemptions that are troubling for agriculture haulers."

"Current ELD technologies do not recognize the hours-of-service exemptions for agriculture that are in federal law. This is a classic example of a one-size-fits-all federal regulation that ignores common sense to the detriment of sectors like agriculture.

"I applaud Secretary Chao for recognizing these obstacles and giving extra time for compliance while DOT issues guidance. While public safety is a critical concern for all of trucking, the safety of living agricultural commodities in transport must also be considered."

Full text:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOOC/bulletins/1e1e02a>

USDA Decides Not to Impose Additional Regulatory Requirements for Organic Producers and Handlers

(USDA Office of Communications Bulletin)

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the decision to withdraw the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule published on January 19, 2017. The rule would have increased federal regulation of livestock and poultry for certified organic producers and handlers. The withdrawal becomes effective May 13, 2018.

Significant policy and legal issues were identified after the rule published in January 2017. After careful review and two rounds of public comment, USDA has determined that the rule exceeds the Department's statutory authority, and that the changes to the existing organic regulations could have a negative effect on voluntary participation in the National Organic Program, including real costs for producers and consumers.

"The existing robust organic livestock and poultry regulations are effective," said USDA Marketing and Regulatory Program Undersecretary Greg Ibach. "The organic industry's continued growth domestically and globally shows that consumers trust the current approach that balances consumer expectations and the needs of organic producers and handlers."

Full text:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOC/bulletins/1e170d4>

Beef Herd Expansion Slows Due to Drought Conditions

(From Drovers.com)

Expansion of America's cowherd shows signs of stalling. Total beef cows in the U.S. were 2% higher on Jan. 1, 2018, at 31.7 million, representing the largest number since 2008. Breeding cattle inventories, however, signal a decrease in the rate of expansion, while drought in the southern and central Plains could shift the cycle into reverse.

The USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Cattle Inventory report counted 94.3 million cattle and calves Jan. 1, an increase of less than 1% compared to a year ago. (See an interactive ranking of states here: <https://www.drovers.com/article/beef-herd-expansion-set-stall-2018>.)

"The cattle cycle is pretty well on track," Randy Blach, CEO of CattleFax, told attendees at the CattleFax Outlook Seminar during the Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show in February. "We saw the USDA numbers released yesterday that indicated the herd expanded again in 2017. We expected that would be the case. But it is slowing down. The herd expansion is slowing down, and it looks like we'll be at our peak cattle inventory numbers in 2019 or 2020."

Full text:

<https://www.drovers.com/article/beef-herd-expansion-slows-due-drought-conditions>

Permalink Indiana Watershed Initiative

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Indiana has announced a second round of funding to improve water quality in two targeted watersheds in northern Indiana through the Indiana Watershed Initiative Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

This project is helping to strengthen agricultural operations and improve water quality in the Shatto Ditch watershed located in Kosciusko County and the Kirkpatrick Ditch watershed located in Newton, Jasper, and Benton counties.

Farmers can sign up for two new practices: saturated buffers and denitrifying bioreactors.

Applications must be received by March 16, 2018.

Read more.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/newsroom/releases/NRCS+Accepting+Second+Round+Applications+for+Indiana+Watershed+Initiative/>

Texas Young Farmer Grant

The Texas Young Farmer Grant program provides financial assistance in the form of dollar-for-dollar matching grant funds to young agricultural producers. Individuals that are 18 to 46 and are engaged or will be engaged in creating or expanding agriculture in Texas may apply.

The applicant must be able to make dollar-for-dollar matching expenditures to sustain, create or expand the proposed project. Each individual grant applicant must clearly describe a distinct project and demonstrate how the individual grant applicant will independently benefit from the Young Farmer Grant. Grant awards range from \$5,000 to \$20,000.

Applications for the next twice-yearly period must be received by March 22, 2018.

Read more.

<http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasAgriculturalFinanceAuthority/YoungFarmerGrant.aspx>