



National Bison Association

8690 Wolff Court, Suite 200 Westminster, CO 80031-3646
www.BisonCentral.com Phone: 303-292-2833 Fax: 303-845-9081

Weekly Update from the National Bison Association

A news and update service *exclusively* for members of the National Bison Association.
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April 21, 2017

Enjoy a 'Day-After' when IBC Ends

The official schedule for the International Bison Conference wraps up on July 7th, but attendees can spend a little extra time enjoying the Big Sky area with an optional Yellowstone bus tour set for Saturday, July 8th.

The daylong tour will take participants through the heart of Yellowstone National Park, with a special emphasis on the bison habit areas. And the tour will include a presentation by Rick Wallen, the lead biologist for bison at Yellowstone National Park.

The buses are scheduled to leave the Huntley Lodge at Big Sky Resort at 9 a.m. and return by 5 p.m. The tour includes a sack lunch and will tour the western and northern sections of the park on our quest to find Yellowstone bison.

"This is a great opportunity for people to see beauty of Yellowstone National Park with the leading experts of Yellowstone Bison and will include stops at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and the Hayden and Lamar valleys," said Jim Matheson, National Bison Association assistant director. "It will also be a relaxing way for people to conclude their experience at the IBC."

Tickets for the day-long tour are \$75 and must be purchased in advance at <https://bisoncentral.com/2017-international-bison-conference-registration-form/>

Look for the IBC flyer in the mail

All National Bison Association Members will be receiving a flyer highlighting the activities and events at the International Bison Conference, scheduled July 4-8 in the Big Sky area of Montana.

The flyer also contains a registration form that members can use to sign up for the conference. Or, people can register online [here](#), or call the NBA at 303-292-2833 to register by phone.

Either way, be sure to sign up by May 15th to take advantage of the Early Bird registration rate.

Lodging is limited, so attendees are advised to call 800-548-4486. Select option 2 and request the National Bison Association room block to reserve your room today. Rates start at \$119/night for single/double occupancy. See a full list of lodging options [here](#).

Also, since the flyer was mailed, Morand Industries and AllFlex have signed up as sponsors of the IBC. We extend our sincere thanks to all our sponsors.

***** disclaimer *****

Colorado family heavily involved in bison industry

(From Farm Forum)

The American dream for many people is defined as “the ideals that freedom, equality and opportunity are available to any and every American.” At least, that is how Dictionary.com defines the American dream.

Of course, most people also agree that the American dream is only available to those who are willing to put in the hard work, dedication and drive in order to achieve their goals.

For Bob and Laurie Dineen of Fort Lupton, Colorado, this is exactly what needed to be done in order to start their business. This business would eventually become one of the largest of its kind in the world.

Great Range Brand Bison is produced and distributed by Rocky Mountain Natural Meats. The 29-year-old brand is the most trusted brand for bison meat in North America, according to their website. Great Range Brand Bison can be found in 24 retail grocery stores and various restaurants.

It was 1985 when the couple had an idea which would transform the way bison was marketed. Laurie was the executive secretary of the National Bison Association, and Bob was working as a ranch hand on a ranch that raised bison among other things.

Laurie explained that if consumers wanted to buy bison meat, it had to be bought from the “exotic game man.” This man also sold things such as rattlesnake meat and alligator meat.

“It was not sold like bison should be sold,” Bob said. “They didn’t really focus on the quality; it was sold out of a box. You didn’t know the body condition or where it came from or anything.” Bob said both of them knew the demand for good bison meat was there.

Motivated by the desire to make the industry profitable, the couple wanted to start a product line to market to consumers that focused on great quality and great service. Bob knew that something needed to change and started selling bison that he had processed in Denver.

Due to Laurie’s position with the National Buffalo Association, and her concern of a possible conflict of interest, Bob became the main driver in the business. Although Laurie could not help him source the bison, she helped with most everything else.

One of the things that Laurie would often help with was the delivery of the product.

“We were delivering meat out of a cooler in the back of a Nissan station wagon right in the very beginning,” Bob said.

“He would pick me up and say, ‘Get in, buckle up and keep your mouth shut,’” Laurie said with a chuckle. “He drove fast and we had places to be.”

When the business started, they did not have anywhere to process the bison and were utilizing a small meat packing facility that would process the bison for them. Then they were only processing a few head of bison per month.

Read more. <http://www.farmforum.net/2017/04/18/colorado-family-heavily-involved-in-bison-industry/>

National Bison Range: Popular, Poor and Again Rudderless

(From the Helena Independent Record)

MOIESE -- Last week, the first bison calf was spotted by the staff here at the National Bison Range.

It is the signal for them to prepare for their opening weekend, which they try to schedule near Mother’s Day, “when all the calves are roaming around,” said National Bison Range Project Leader Jeff King.

Between 300 and 400 bison are kept on 18,500 fenced acres surrounded by the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In a year, the range can receive up to 200,000 visitors. In 2011, they produced an economic impact to the surrounding area of about \$13 million, according to a report commissioned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Today, six people are employed here, with four vacant positions. The position of refuge officer sat empty for about a year, but is expected to be filled next month. That will be in time for the opening of Red Sleep Drive and the start of the summer visitation season, King said. The park is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. The visitor center also used to be open daily, but those hours have been cut back and an “iron ranger” has been installed to collect fees when the center is closed.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association said the refuge system, including the Bison Range, is operating with approximately 20 percent less funds than six years ago.

In January, the Bison Range was stepping up efforts to recruit unpaid volunteers. The list of things that needed doing ranged from staffing the Visitor Center, to mowing public use areas, to clerical duties, to assisting on biological projects.

Besides federal budget cuts, the range's future was put in limbo after a federal judge in 2010 pulled the plug on an annual funding agreement that split refuge jobs between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

A year ago, FWS said the agency would back transferring management of the Bison Range to the tribes if legislation were introduced in Congress to remove the range from the National Wildlife Refuge system, and FWS control.

http://helenair.com/national-bison-range-popular-poor-and-again-rudderless/article_89dbf2ae-85e0-5774-a9d7-38a9b0a50ce4.html

US Halts Plan to Transfer Montana Bison Management to Tribe

(From NBC4-Washington)

U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has reversed plans to give management of Montana's National Bison Range to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, saying that he is committed to not selling or transferring public lands.

Zinke, a former Montana congressman, told the [Missoulian](#) in an email that the tribes would still play a "pivotal role" in discussions about the future of the range, 29-square miles (76-square kilometers) of hilly fenced-in grasslands with 350 bison.

"I took a hard look at the current proposal suggesting a new direction for the National Bison Range and assessed what this would mean for Montana and the nation," Zinke said. "As Secretary, my job is to look 100 years forward at all of Interior's resources. I recognize the Bison Range is a critical part of our past, present and future, which is why I have changed course." The refuge run by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is located completely within the boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation, on land the tribes say was taken illegally in 1908, when the U.S. government established the refuge to save bison from extinction.

Full Story here: <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/national-international/US-Halts-Plan-to-Transfer-Montana-Bison-Management-to-Tribe-419411694.html>

Slaughter of Yellowstone Bison at the Center of Culture War

(From NPR All Things Considered)

In the same year that Congress voted to make bison the national mammal, Yellowstone National Park had its second largest cull ever — reducing the herd by more than 1,200 animals.

RAY SUAREZ, HOST:

Americans have always liked the idea of bison, but living with them is another matter. In the same year Congress made bison the national mammal, more than 1,200 were culled from the Yellowstone National Park herd. Amy Martin reports on why the U.S. is killing so many of the animals it also idealizes.

AMY MARTIN, BYLINE: Thirty miles north of Yellowstone is a place called Paradise Valley. Picture snowy peaks, a winding river, big sweeping meadows...
(SOUNDBITE OF COWS MOOING)

MARTIN: ...And cows. DruscaKinkie runs a cattle ranch here.

DRUSCA KINKIE: I think the concept of free-roaming bison will harm agriculture immensely.

MARTIN: The annual bison cull in Yellowstone attracts controversy every year, and this winter was the second biggest ever. But Kinkie supports the reduction of the herd.

KINKIE: There's a disease issue with bison. They've been exposed to brucellosis.

MARTIN: Brucellosis is a bacterial disease, which elk and bison in the Yellowstone area originally caught from livestock. Kinkie says the threat of transmission back to cattle looms large. And it's that fear that drove the state of Montana to sue Yellowstone in 1995, forcing the park to ship more animals to slaughter. But there's more going on here than just disease. Bison are caught in the culture wars. Kinkie says she feels misunderstood.

KINKIE: You have all these people out there fighting for free-roaming bison. And it's a concept. It's a vision that they have. And we're fighting for our ability to survive here and make a living as we have for the last 60, almost 70 years. And they don't have anything to lose in their vision. And we have everything to lose in ours.

ROBBIE MAGNAN: Buffalo has taken care of Native Americans since the beginning of time. MARTIN: Robbie Magnan says there is a lot to lose on the other side. He's the director of the Fish and Wildlife Department for the Fort Peck Tribes in northeastern Montana. For him, the culture wars started much further back when Europeans first arrived in North America and more than 50 million wild bison roamed the continent.

MAGNAN: The federal government massacred them because they figured out that was the only way to bring the Indians down to their knees - it was destroy their economy. And that's why they were almost wiped out.

MARTIN: Now, only about 30,000 bison are protected in North America and, of those, less than half are living in anything close to wild conditions. As Magnan drives up into the hills of the reservation, he says wild bison are an important part of the country's heritage. That's why he helped to develop an alternative to slaughter.

MAGNAN: Instead of massacring these animals when they migrate out of the park in the wintertime when they're hungry, OK, let's get them out alive and start other cultural herds going.

MARTIN: To do that, the Fort Peck Tribes built a 320-acre brucellosis-quarantined pasture surrounded by extra high fences. Here, the Yellowstone bison can be held and tested and many eventually declared brucellosis free. Last year, the National Park Service said it supported using the facility, but then Magnan says...

MAGNAN: After they found out it works, they quit it. And why quit something when you know it works?

MARTIN: The person responsible for answering that question is Sue Masica, who oversees this region of the park service. But she declined requests for an interview.

Those guys are moving.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: How many did you count? Yeah, they're going.

RICK WALLEN: I'm guessing there's 200-plus.

MARTIN: Rick Wallen is the team leader for the park's bison management program. He's watching a large bison herd move quickly down the valley of the Yellowstone River. It's a cold day and their dark shapes stand out against the snow. Despite the beauty, the mood is intense. For most of the year, Wallen studies these animals. But every winter, he manages their slaughter.

WALLEN: There is a cost, and that cost is more emotional for some than others. I've even had people on days that we were supposed to go there and do the work call and say, you know, I can't do this anymore. I have to resign my position. I'm sorry.

MARTIN: Wallen thinks a better solution would be quarantine. That would allow him to do what he says is his job.

WALLEN: Protect the wild in wild bison. Otherwise, they go extinct.

MARTIN: That extinction comes in the form of domestication. Bison are increasingly raised as livestock and bred with cattle to make them more docile. Wallen says Yellowstone is a bulwark against this trend, a place where bison still have to use their instincts to survive in the wild. For NPR News, I'm Amy Martin in Yellowstone National Park.

Editor's Note: The NBA filed the following comment with NPR:

Amy Martin's coverage of the Slaughter of Yellowstone Bison at the Center of Culture War was excellent coverage of this complex issue...right up until her closing statement. The assertion that bison are increasingly raised as livestock and bred with cattle to make them more docile is false. The National Bison Association's Code of Ethics prohibits any crossbreeding with cattle, and many ranchers are testing their herds to selectively cull animals with significant levels of cattle genetics. Bison are being raised as livestock, but we want to make sure that they remain undomesticated. We want bison to be bison.

With New Farm Bill Looming, Next Agriculture Census Critically Important

(From Southwest Farm Press)

The paperwork for the 2017 Census of Agriculture will arrive in farm and ranch mailboxes later this year, and producers are being encouraged to be vigorously involved in this census as it will be used by lawmakers to help draft the new farm bill next year.

Conducted every five years by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the census is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them. USDA-NASS officials say that while every census is important to the industry, the information in this census could prove timely because it falls as work on the 2018 farm bill takes place.

Related: PCG officials promote 'unified ag coalition' in farm bill discussions

"The Census of Agriculture remains the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agriculture data for every county in the nation," said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. "As such, census results are relied upon heavily by those who serve farmers and rural communities,

including federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations, Extension educators, researchers, and farmers and ranchers themselves."

Important information provided by farmers and ranchers are designed to paint a precise and timely picture of the state of agriculture that offers law and policy makers the information they need when considering and drafting rules and legislation to support the industry, including land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics.

Full text: <http://tinyurl.com/md8g5ey>

New study shows 'organic' attribute is least important to consumers

(From Sustainable Food News)

A new University of Illinois study shows that the 'no growth hormones' attribute was prioritized as most important and "organic" as the least important. For products like poultry, the USDA forbids the use of hormones, meaning consumers may not be well informed about production claims.

The study ranks production attributes - how animals were treated, what they were fed, whether they received growth hormones or antibiotics, whether it was produced under organic standards - as being most important to buyers for four different products: beef, chicken, milk, and eggs. The study, "[Which livestock production claims matter most to consumers?](#)" was published in the journal *Agriculture and Human Values*.

The study determined the importance of seven specific on-farm practices in consumers' purchasing decisions:

- Animals were not administered growth hormones.
- Genetically modified organisms were not used in the production of this product (non-GMO).
- Animals were humanely raised.
- Animals were not administered antibiotics.
- Animals were raised in a free-range (or cage-free) environment.
- Animals were grass-fed (or raised on a vegetarian diet).
- The product is certified organic.
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The top three attributes overall were "no growth hormones", "non-GMO", and "humanely raised," though there were differences in importance based on product type. The "organic" attribute was ranked lowest in importance for consumers.

"The biggest surprise in the study is that 'no growth hormones' is the number one concern consumers have across the board on all of these products," said U of I food economist and lead researcher Brenna Ellison. "It's odd because growth hormones are already prohibited for poultry products. Further, products that are certified organic or humanely-raised also prohibit the use of growth hormones in animals. Ultimately, it means consumers are spending unnecessary time looking for labels that reflect this particular attribute."

The presence of such labeling claims can determine the sales of one product over another identical product. If one producer labels its packages of chicken as having "no growth

hormones" and another producer doesn't, the latter is at a disadvantage when consumers are selecting for that specific attribute. Even though both brands of chicken are hormone-free, by government mandate, the producer who didn't pay to add a label may suffer. Products that carry the "no growth hormones" claim must note that these are prohibited by the government on the packaging, but this is usually in the fine print where consumers may or may not be looking. The lack of importance of the "organic" claim was also surprising to Ellison and her co-authors, Kathleen Brooks and Taro Mieno of the University of Nebraska.

"When most people hear the term 'organic,' they think of produce, fruits, and vegetables. I don't think the term translates as well to animals. Consequently, consumers may not understand that the organic certification for meat and other animal products actually already includes a lot of these other production attributes."

Ellison says the fact that producers keep putting multiple claims on their products, even though broad claims like "organic" and "humanely raised" encompass almost all of the other production attributes, suggests that producers may be skeptical that consumers know the full definition of these labels. "They keep adding more labels to make sure consumers can find all of the things that they want even though one label might do the job."