



## **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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***May 10, 2019***

### **Less than 2 Months Until the NBA Summer Conference**

We're now less than two months from the 2019 NBA Summer Conference, hosted by the North Dakota Buffalo Association! Three days of fun, networking and education are in store for our July summer conference.

See the agenda below and learn why you won't want to miss this amazing opportunity. Registration is just \$160/person and you can register quickly at <https://bisoncentral.com/nba-summer-conference/> and get all the details including host hotel reservation instructions and links. We hope you can join us Go Forth in the North!

BISMARCK, ND - JULY 7 - 10

# 2019 SUMMER CONFERENCE

## *Conference Highlights*

### SUNDAY

*Travel Day for Attendees and an optional evening Missouri River Cruise with Hors d'oeuvres & Cash Bar - Just 100 tickets available at \$50/each.*

### MONDAY

*We'll spend the day touring local attractions including Fort Abraham Lincoln where we'll enjoy a tour of the site and a bison-brat cook-off! We'll then head to the North Dakota Heritage Center where we'll tour the museum and enjoy a history of bison in ND before returning to our host hotel for an evening reception and bison feast!*

### TUESDAY

*Tuesday will be spent networking and taking in presentations from an array of renowned speakers addressing pertinent topics including bison's place in regenerative agriculture, how farmers and ranchers can mitigate and deal effectively with depression, the ins and outs of importing bison to and from Canada, an update on the Water Buffalo labeling issue, and much more. We'll enjoy our benefit auction and dinner that evening.*

### WEDNESDAY

*Wednesday is dedicated to our optional ranch tour in which attendees will tour the National Buffalo Museum and it's bison herd; the historic KenMar Buffalo Ranch in New Rockford - to include comments from its founder, Dr. Ken Throlson; a tour of Heartland Bison Ranch and the 2020 class of Young Guns yearling bulls to conclude with a ranch reception before returning to Bismarck. Tickets include bus transport and lunch - \$50/each*



GOING FORTH  
IN THE NORTH

Get all the details and register online at  
[bisoncentral.com/nba-summer-conference/](http://bisoncentral.com/nba-summer-conference/)

## Market Prices Down in April

Wholesale prices for dressed young bull carcasses dropped in April, while dressed heifer carcasses rebounded slightly, according to the latest wholesale bison monthly price report issued by USDA's Gain and Livestock Market Reporting Service.

Dressed young bulls averaged \$449.75/cwt. in April, with was \$15.05/cwt. lower than in March and \$43.11/cwt. lower than in April 2018. Dressed heifers averaged \$428/79/cwt., with was \$5.40/cwt. higher than in March, but \$42.78/cwt. lower than the previous April. Older bull carcasses were lower, and older carcasses were higher than in March.

The average young bull carcass weighed 700 lbs. in April, and the average heifer carcass weighed 549 lbs.

Year-to-date, 17,736 bison have been processed under federal inspection. This is 1,558 more head than were processed during the same period last year, and is the highest number processed year-to-date since 2009.

The USDA's latest monthly price report is available here.  
[https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw\\_ls526.txt](https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls526.txt)

The NBA's five-year price tracking report is available in the members' section of [www.bisoncentral.com](http://www.bisoncentral.com).

## Let's 'Unpack' the Carcass Price Story

*(Blog post by Dave Carter)*

This is the best time of year to be in bison business.

Northern state ranchers are finally feeling the warming rays of spring sun after a long, cold winter. Across most of the country new red calves are dotting greening pastures.

It's a season of anticipation and expectation.

This spring, though, there's a bit of angst that's been unfamiliar in our business for the past decade. For the first time in the past 15 years, the finished bison market took a sharp drop since December. While our prices are still the envy of any other livestock sector, any drop tends to make ranchers a bit nervous.

And, like all other sectors of agriculture, ranchers are looking for reasons for the drop.

I recently received a letter from one new member who had transitioned into bison from a long career in the cattle business. He noted with concern that the fed bison market had dropped but that retail prices don't seem to be budging. He wondered if this was a sign that—like the cattle industry-- the "big packers" were somehow responsible for the drop and were busy pocketing some extra cash.

In a sense, he's right. The "big packers" are playing a role. But, not in the way he suspects.

As bison meat grew in popularity through the years, we successfully expanded demand for all parts of the carcass. Restaurants across the country now feature bison short ribs, fajitas, and brisket. People are cooking more bison burgers, and chili for their families. Carcass utilization has thankfully extended to the products that families feed their companion animals as well.

An expanding number of pet food brands have started to include bison as a key ingredient in their premium products. And, with a relatively small number of bison processed each year, the availability of those ingredients is limited.

A few years ago, one company that specializes in buying bison byproducts from the packers, and then processing that material into ingredients for the pet food industry made a major move to corner the market on those byproducts. In short, that company offered our processors an extremely high—and unexpected—price for those ingredients.

Our "big packers" could have pocketed much of those pet food premiums. Instead, they passed that money back to the producers in the form of higher carcass prices. According to some processors, those premiums have added as much as \$300 to the carcass value.

Here's where it gets sticky.

The same company that locked up bison pet food ingredients is also a major importer of water buffalo ingredients being sold and labeled simply as "buffalo." After the National Bison Association mounted a challenge to improperly labeled water buffalo, that company has decided to significantly lower the money it pays for bison byproducts.

Some have said that we should have turned our head and ignored the issue of mislabeled water buffalo as long as that company was willing to pay strong premiums for bison ingredients.

After spending years of building a relationship with our customers based upon honesty, transparency and integrity, is it in the best interest of our business to be a party to mislabeling in the marketplace?

Fortunately, many pet food brands are committed to honestly labeling their products. And, there are other companies that supply ingredients into the pet food business. Many bison processors are already working with those other companies.

The National Bison Association has launched a new on-line page entitled "[Sniffing Out the Best Brands for Bison-Loving Pets](#)" That page—which identifies the best brands, along with some to avoid—is being promoted heavily through social media, traditional media, and other avenues that reach "pet parents" across the country.

The fundamental demand for all parts of the bison carcass remain strong. The NBA is working with our commercial marketers to develop new areas of consumer outreach to continue to build our market demand in retail stores, restaurants, and the pet products sector.

We face an unanticipated challenge as we move into the months ahead, but there's ample reason to smile as we welcome the new crop of calves this spring.

Read all of Dave's blogs here. <https://bisoncentral.com/blog/>

## **Oklahoma City Zoo Introduces New American Bison Calves**

*(From KFOR – 4)*

The Oklahoma City Zoo introduced two new members to their family last week!

On Friday, the zoo introduced two American bison calves, Yarrow and Verbena, who are about 5 months old.

Zoo officials say their names are prairie flowers, which were chosen by their caretakers and “represent the bison’s important role in the prairie ecosystem.”

Currently, the calves have visual access to 18-year-old Mary Ann. Their care team will soon start introductions and observations to determine when all three girls will share the bison habitat full-time.

Staff at the zoo say Verbena is larger than Yarrow.

Read more. <https://kfor.com/2019/05/05/oklahoma-city-zoo-introduces-new-american-bison-calves/>

## **Tracking Bison Across the Grasslands of Montana**

*(From The Smithsonian)*

My name is Hila Shamoan, and I’m a landscape ecologist with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. My job is to study how different ecological processes effect ecosystems (like how a bison’s behavior changes its habitat). I’m also part conservation biologist, which means I research ways to better protect Earth’s biodiversity.

I spent the first two weeks of April working with colleagues at American Prairie Reserve to place GPS collars on plains bison in the grasslands of the Reserve. Before I talk about how we accomplished this, I should explain why we’re tracking this subspecies of American bison — and why it’s important to study how they move.

Imagine a grassland from a bird’s-eye view. Most would picture an ocean of grass, the same bland landscape as far as the eye can see. But this is far from accurate. A closer look would reveal a diverse mosaic of habitat patches that support hundreds of plant species, each adapted to its own niche within the whole.

This complex grassland system is created and maintained by variations in soil, topography (the shape of the land), climate, fire and by animals that ecologists call “ecosystem engineers.” Ecosystem engineers are organisms that physically modify their environment in a way that provides new habitat for other species — and bison are a great example. These grassland engineers transform the land in many ways.

Read more. <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/conservation-ecology-center/news/tracking-bison-across-grasslands-montana>

## **The A&W Bison Burger is Only Available at Locations in Manitoba**

*(From Trendhunter Lifestyle)*

The A&W Bison Burger is the latest creation from the Canadian QSR brand that aims to offer patrons a delicious alternative to traditional beef burgers.

Available only at participating locations in Manitoba, the burger consists of a three-ounce bison patty that is topped with grilled onions, mayo, grainy mustard, lettuce and tomato on a toasted sesame bun. The Double Bison Burger is also available as a more indulgent option for consumers seeking a more substantial way to satisfy their hunger.

The A&W Bison Burger is only available for a limited time and is sure to come as welcome news to foodie Canadian consumers who are looking for a different kind of burger to try out this spring.

Source. <https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/aw-bison-burger>

## **Conservation of the Badlands Bison**

*(From National Park Foundation)*

Though smaller creatures rightly enjoy admiration and protection in national parks (e.g., the Devils Hole pupfish, cutthroat trout, Kemp's ridley sea turtles), the biggest ones require targeted conservation efforts too. Bison, one of America's national animals, are the largest mammals within Badlands National Park in South Dakota. These giant beasts, weighing anywhere between 900 and 2,000 pounds, are part of a fascinating ongoing wildlife conservation effort at the park.

There was once a time when bison roamed freely in huge numbers across the Great Plains. An estimated 30 million bison in the 1500s dwindled dramatically to less than 1,000 on the continent by the late 1800s. Conservation efforts in Badlands National Park began when 50 bison were reintroduced to the park during the 1960s, followed by an additional 20 bison in the 1980s. Today, the population has reached approximately 1,200 bison.

Badlands National Park is working to expand the bison's range within the park. To accomplish this objective, the park worked in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service and other partners to secure a land swap with its neighbor, the Don Kelly Ranch, freeing up land for bison migration. This project will add an additional 22,000 acres, providing the bison more than 80,000 acres to roam within the park.

The project also provided fencing to ensure that cattle on nearby ranches do not intermingle with the bison. An old boundary fence will now be replaced with woven wire bison fence and cattle guards will be installed along the roads. Funds for the project were appropriated by Congress and made available to the National Park Service for its 100-year anniversary. These grants were then met with the required 50% match from private funding, including \$255,000 from the National Park Foundation.

Now that the bison population is close to 1,200, the herd is officially above the necessary number to be considered a "conservation herd." This classification indicates that the population should be able to reproduce and increase their numbers naturally.

Full story here. <https://www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/conservation-badlands-bison>

## **Wyoming Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team meets May 21**

*(From Tri-State Livestock News)*

The Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team will meet 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, at The Inn in Lander, 260 Grandview Dr.

"This annual meeting provides members of the team as well as the general public an opportunity to learn about the latest cases and trends of brucellosis in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho cattle herds and wildlife," said Bruce Hoar, associate research scientist for the University of Wyoming.

Wyoming State Veterinarian Jim Logan will provide a brucellosis surveillance update. Current cattle and bison brucellosis cases in Montana and Idaho will be discussed.

Full text:

<https://www.tsln.com/news/governors-brucellosis-coordination-team-meets-may-21-in-lander/>

## **Cargill Recalls Southern States Feed Due Potentially Deadly Toxins**

*(From WDBJ7.com)*

Cargill's animal nutrition business is voluntarily recalling select Southern States® feed because it contains levels of aflatoxin in excess of FDA guidelines.

Aflatoxins can cause Aflatoxicosis, which, in its acute form, can result in generalized hemorrhage, bloody diarrhea and death in 1-3 days. Its effects and health consequences are the same across all species and age classes, but especially affects immature animals, also causing reduced feed intake, reduced weight gain, liver damage, jaundice, and eventually death.

The affected produces included feed for a variety of animals and were manufactured and sold in the eastern United States, but removed from retail shelves throughout February, March, and April 2019.

According to the FDA, no adverse health effects to livestock, horses, or poultry have been reported, but Cargill is issuing the recall out of an abundance of caution.

[Article includes a complete list of recalled products.]

Full text: <http://tinyurl.com/y2c2vs8u>

## **Grants for Iowa Farmers Impacted by Flooding**

The Center for Rural Affairs is partnering with Farm Aid and Iowa Farmers Union to help farmers impacted by recent flooding in Iowa. If you are an Iowa farmer in an area damaged by the recent flooding, you may be eligible for a \$500 grant to help with personal expenses.

The grant is to be used for household expenses, including medical bills, and may not be used for professional expenses related to farm operation.

Read more. <https://www.cfra.org/2019FloodGrant>

## **Beef industry debuts sustainability framework**

*(From PR Newswire)*

Major food and retail companies, cattle producers, veterinarians, scientists, and non-governmental organizations jointly adopted the U.S. Beef Industry Sustainability Framework (Framework), the first-ever resource to demonstrate U.S. beef sustainability across the full value-chain.

The Framework is a product of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB), a multi-stakeholder organization representing 30 percent of the nation's cattle herd, more than 20 billion pounds of beef processed, and more than 100 million consumers.

"Today, the U.S. beef industry serves a delicious, healthy and sustainable product," said Dr. Kim Stackhouse-Lawson, JBS-USA Director of Sustainability and immediate past-chair of the USRSB. "The U.S. Beef Industry Sustainability Framework is about telling that story to consumers by improving transparency, as well as helping the U.S. beef value-chain explore opportunities to more responsibly use resources, raise animals, and care for the people who help beef get to the American dinner table."

The Framework leverages opportunities for continuous improvement unique to businesses and operations who raise, process or distribute beef in the U.S. The voluntary resource was developed over the course of four years by beef farmers and ranchers, feedyard operators, livestock auction markets, packers and processors, retail and foodservice companies, veterinarians, NGOs, and other stakeholders who share a mission to advance, support, and communicate U.S. beef sustainability.

The Framework outlines six *High-Priority Indicators*, areas most important to the sustainability of beef. These areas include water resources, land resources, animal health and well-being, employee safety and well-being, efficiency and yield and air and greenhouse gas emissions. Guidance documents, or *Sustainability Assessment Guides*, help individuals and companies achieve sector-specific *Metrics*, practices that demonstrate sustainability across *High-Priority Indicators* while ensuring operational and financial success.

Current USRSB chair Ben Weinheimer spoke to the seven internal and public comment periods held during the development of the Framework. These comment periods ensured the resource was applicable to all business models, regions, and production systems.

Full story here. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/industry-adopts-us-beef-industry-sustainability-framework-announces-nationwide-outreach-300845364.html>



## **A Triple Threat to Consumers: China Tariffs Add to NAFTA Replacement Woes**

*(From Fortune)*

Plenty of people complain about being over-taxed. Now they have another legitimate gripe: being over-tariffed.

For all the talk of [tariffs on Chinese goods](#) going into effect Friday, consumers are actually dealing with a triple threat. Indeed, relationships with the country's biggest trade partners by far—Canada and Mexico—are sitting in limbo, even with NAFTA replacement USMCA (US-Mexico-Canada Agreement) having been signed in October 2018. That leaves a sticky problem that either gets solved soon or which may sit around well into a presidential election year.

The Trump administration originally imposed 25% steel and 10% aluminum tariffs on metals coming in from Canada and Mexico to pressure for changes on NAFTA. But though a new agreement has been signed, the U.S. has yet to remove its tariffs and, in response, neither have the neighbors to the north and south. The center-right American Action Forum has estimated that tariffs applied to imports from Mexico and Canada would [cost consumers \\$2.7 billion](#) a year, and that doesn't count the loss in business U.S. exporters see from retaliatory tariffs. And while the tariffs are in place, none of the three NAFTA countries will ratify the USMCA, which could mean longer-term expenses.

Full story here. <http://fortune.com/2019/05/07/china-tariffs-nafta-usmca/>

## **Conservation Innovation Grants in Missouri**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Missouri is accepting applications for Conservation Innovation Grants to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

All non-federal entities and individuals are invited to apply for grants up to \$75,000. Priorities for 2019 include grazing land and inventory assessments, soil health, native plant communities, and water-quality and nutrient management.

Applications must be received by May 31, 2019.

Read more. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mo/programs/financial/cig/>

## **Conservation Innovation Grants in Arkansas**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for Conservation Innovation Grants in Arkansas. Approximately \$300,000 is available through the program to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies within Arkansas.

Project proposals should demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource concern. For FY 2019, Arkansas NRCS will consider offering grants in the following areas: nutrient and sediment reduction in impaired watersheds, high tunnels, organic, irrigation, soil health, and adoption of cover crops in rice rotations. Individual matching grant awards may not exceed \$75,000.

Applications must be submitted by May 31, 2019.

Read more. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ar/newsroom/releases/e0cf2d43-eb78-4f10-b328-8e88c3f1c5c9/>

## **Conservation Innovation Grants Program in Idaho**

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Idaho plans to invest up to \$225,000 in the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, funding innovative conservation projects in three focus areas: grazing lands, soil health, and management to benefit threatened and endangered species or species of greatest conservation need.

Special consideration for funding will be given to applications that relate to the following priorities related to Water Quantity and Quality: Irrigation Water Management and Source Water Protection/Precision Agriculture.

Grant proposals are due June 7, 2019.

Read more.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/id/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1453231>

## **Conservation Innovation Grants in California**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California is accepting proposals for its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. Up to \$500,000 is available for one- to three-year grants. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed \$75,000 in fiscal year 2019.

In 2019, NRCS California is prioritizing proposals that improve the "technical toolbox" to address the following on-farm resource concerns: soil health, water quality and quantity; plant quality; air quality; forestland health; wildlife; energy conservation; and waste recycling/resource conservation. Eligible applicants include state and local government, non-governmental organizations, Tribal governments, eligible private business, and individuals.

Proposals are due by June 10, 2019.

Read more.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1454107>