



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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September 29, 2017

Bison Producers, Marketers Build Connections in D.C.

A delegation of nearly 25 bison producers and marketers headed home last week after three days in Washington, D.C. last Friday, a bit footsore from walking between more than 25 meetings and hoarse from conversations with key Senators, Representatives, staff members and USDA officials during the NBA's annual Washington, D.C. Roundup.

"The National Bison Association members participating in our roundup last year helped forge and strengthen important relationships that can help us build the herds, grow the marketplace, and ultimately restore one million bison to North America," said Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association.

The grassroots delegation focused on several issues during the week, including research priorities for bison herd health, incentives to bring new producers into bison production, export issues impacting bison, and key recommendations for the upcoming farm bill.

The delegation also presented lawmakers and policymakers with briefing papers covering the key issues in each meeting. Those briefing papers are available the members' section at www.bisoncentral.com.

Lobbying Teams Meet with 20 congressional Offices

Last Wednesday, the participants in the NBA Washington Roundup divided into four individual teams to conduct a total of 20 meetings with Senators, Representatives, and staff members on Capitol Hill. Discussion at the meeting focused primarily on the Farm Bill, funding for MCF research, and passage of the annual resolution designating the first Saturday in November as National Bison Day.

On the Farm Bill, participants asked the legislators to continue funding for beginning farm incentives, conservation initiatives, and research priorities. They also encouraged the establishment of a technical assistance division within USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service to provide outreach, education and training to very small meat plants.

U.S. Sens. Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) both expressed a strong interest in hosting Farm Bill listening sessions on a bison ranching the coming months. And, Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND), Chair of the Senate Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, requested specific funding priorities for the bison business.

Delegation Meets with Five Key USDA Agencies

Last Thursday, the delegation of ranchers and producers at the Washington, D.C. Roundup scurried through the halls of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to meet with the leadership within four USDA agencies.

- Agricultural Research Service – The meeting with Dr. Cyril Gay and Michael Arnold focused on agricultural research initiatives, with a focus on preventative health initiatives, and on *Mycoplasma bovis* issues
- Foreign Agricultural Service/U.S. Trade Representative – The meeting with Dawn Williams, Elizabeth Riley and Laura Anderson of the Foreign Agricultural Service, and Roger Wentzel of the USTR – covered a broad spectrum of issues, including: 1) Importance of “do no harm” to U.S./Canadian trade relationships in the NAFTA renegotiation; 2) Eliminating the tariff on U.S. bison exports to the EU; 3) Opening the Korean and Japanese markets to bison; and 4) assuring that future trade policies that include trade relief for livestock use the word “bovine” rather than “beef.”
- Farm Service Agency – The meeting with Acting Administrator Chris Byerhelm focused on: 1) beginning farmer and rancher outreach; 2) Adapting FSA disaster assistance programs to recognize the year-round stocking practices of the bison business; and potential to encourage expiring CRP land to be opened for bison production.
- Food Safety and Inspection Service – The meeting included Paul Kiecker; acting Administrator for FSIS; Rosalyn Murphy-Jenkins of the FSIS labeling division; and William Smith, FSIS Field Office director. Discussion focused on issues impacting producers utilizing federally inspected meat plants with fewer than 25 employees, with an emphasis on the inconsistent inspection practices, and the excessive fees charged to bison producers in small plants. We also pressed FSIS on the need to clarify the labeling of products containing water buffalo.

On Friday, a smaller delegation of participants met with Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, director of USDA’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture. Also participating by phone was Dr. Adele Turzillo, director of NIFA’s Division of Animal Systems. Dr. Ramaswamy provided the group with information on programs within NIFA that can provide resources for bison herd health, animal management, new producers outreach, and meat marketing.

Ranchers Discuss Potential Nutritional Guidelines with National Academies

While in Washington, D.C. for the Roundup last week, a group of the participants met with the chair of the National Academies’ Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources, to discuss steps required to initiate the development of National Research Council (NRC) nutritional guidelines for bison.

The NRC has developed nutritional guidelines for many species, including cattle, poultry, dogs and cats, and fish. Those guidelines are developed through a lengthy process of reviewing all scientific literature, and initiating new research.

Dr. Robin Schoen, the Chair of the Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources, encouraged the bison business to begin conducting a thorough review of the available scientific literature regarding bison nutrition. She also provided information on potential funding sources to help underwrite the process conducting that literature review.

In a related development, the National Buffalo Foundation—in cooperation with the NBA Science and Research Committee--this week authorized up to \$8,000 to contract with a qualified individual to begin the literature review on bison nutrition.

Last Chance to Vote in Regional Elections

Tomorrow is the deadline for NBA members in Regions II, IV, VI, and VIII to cast ballots for their candidates for regional director on the NBA Board of Directors. All Active, multi-year and Life NBA members in those regions should have received an email ballot for the election of a director to represent them on the NBA Board of Directors.

The regions, and candidates are:

- Region II, representing Colorado and Wyoming. Candidates are John Graves, Greg Nott and Debbie Thieman, all of Colorado.
- Region IV, representing Illinois, Indiana, Kansas and Missouri. David Ruhter of Illinois and Keith Yearout of Kansas are the candidates.
- Region VI, representing Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Gerald Parsons, is the candidate.
- Region VII, representing Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Kristopher Kelley of Kentucky is the candidate.

Members may also cast a write-in vote on their ballots if they prefer, but can only vote by one method: email or mail-in ballot. Ballots are due by September 30th. All votes are collected and tallied by a third party.

Matheson in Kansas for Holistic Ranching Seminar

NBA Assistant Director, Jim Matheson, participated in a seminar this week hosted by Kansas bison rancher Ken Klemm at his Homestead Ranch in western Kansas.

The seminar featured classroom education on various aspects of holistic management principles, and how they apply to a successful bison operation. Holistic management educator, Kirk Gadzia, provided instruction alongside Klemm for a thorough crash course in holistic management. Matheson provided an overview of today's bison business and of the National Bison Association's activities and services.

The seminar totals three days, with two days dedicated to hands-on bison management training in the field, and real-world holistic management planning.

Montana Made: Roam Free Bison Bites

(From KTVQ)

There were once upwards of 60 million bison in North America until the population was brought down to around 300. This week's Montana Made segment spotlights how one Montana rancher is raising bison while also making a business out of it.

"Every time we traveled across the country we would stop to go see the buffalo in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Montana, and so it was kind of an annual trip and I was always just fascinated with the animal," said Roam Free Bison Bites owner Jonathan Sepp. "So, I always knew later on in life at some point I was going to basically work into raising bison, so that's where the journey started."

Sepp spent nine years in the U.S. Air Force saving up money before moving to Montana and buying his own ranch to raise and sell bison. He began selling raw and frozen pieces of bison meat until he found it wasn't going to work financially.

"The cost of freezing and transportation and all this was far too high for the amount that you could raise on land and still turn a profit. I was working two jobs and started a construction company as well just to basically be paying this place down," Sepp said. Then Sepp met Britany Masters in Seattle.

"I met him, he's like, 'I have a bison ranch.' I'm like, 'Is it grass fed? Are you holistically managed?' Are you like all these things and he was like, 'I am but it's not as easy as it seems'," Masters recalled.

Masters and Sepp worked to find a better way to sell their product."

"Nine months ago, we started on a journey to shift our business model a little bit and distribute wider to more people in a cheaper format of non-frozen meat, which requires us to smoke it and dry it, which is how people have been doing it for thousands of years."

Not only did they find a cheaper way to distribute, but they also managed to keep in mind their main goal of creating a healthy product.

Read more. <http://www.ktvq.com/story/36454892/montana-made-roam-free-bison-bites>

Home on the Range: Bison A Sweet Business, And Meat, In Wisconsin

(From the Journal Sentinel)

No need to hitch up the chuck wagon and head west to wrangle some fresh bison meat for dinner tonight. Bison are roaming Wisconsin farmlands right now and available for home cooks at local retailers and farmers markets and direct from the farm.

"It's a very sweet-tasting, lean meat," said bison farmer Greg Kummrow of Battle Creek Beef & Bison, 38413 Delafield Road in Summit. Greg, his wife, Patricia, and their family raise and sell bison and other meats directly from the farm that has been in Greg's family since 1886. Living in the land of countless cows, why raise big, brown, burly bison?

A former dairy farmer, Kummrow said diversifying helped them survive as a small farm, especially when things got tough for the dairy industry. Going big with hundreds or thousands of cows was not his way to run a farm.

Battle Creek's bison are pasture-raised without chemicals and hormones, with the mothers raising their calves.

Kummrow sells ground bison meat along with bison bacon, sausages, roasts and steaks with prices beginning at \$7.35 a pound. His favorite and most expensive cut is the tenderloin, but he rarely enjoys it as his customers snap up all he can provide at \$39.95 per pound. Supply of local bison meat barely keeps up with demand and "increases every day," according to Kummrow. "We sell everything we can produce," Patricia said.

Read more. <http://www.jsonline.com/story/life/food/2017/09/19/home-range-bison-sweet-business-and-meat-wisconsin/645464001/>

Yellowstone Bison Numbers Down After Largest Cull in Years

(From the Bozeman Chronicle)

After its largest cull in nearly a decade, Yellowstone National Park biologists documented a decline of the number of bison that roam in and out of the park.

Park spokesman Jonathan Shafer said in an email that biologists' surveys in early August found roughly 4,800 bison live in the park, which is down from the 5,500 bison the park counted in 2016.

The count came months after more than 1,200 of the furry mammals were killed earlier this year, either through hunting or ship-to-slaughter operations.

Bison are removed from the population because of a management plan that calls for a population of 3,000. Population estimates have hovered around the 5,000 mark for a few years.

The population report is coming later this year than in previous years because counts weren't completed until August. The final version is still being reviewed by top officials in the park. Shafer said the full report would be released in a few days.

The number the park counted this year became public when Montana's state veterinarian Marty Zaluski offered it to the Montana Environmental Quality Council, a panel of legislators and citizens that met in Helena on Thursday.

"They are down from last year," Zaluski said.

State, federal and tribal government agencies are involved in the management of bison. They are working now to line out how they will try to reduce the population this winter, which will again likely include both hunting and slaughter.

Full story: https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/environment/yellowstone-bison-numbers-down-after-largest-cull-in-years/article_b73c5b86-26de-5ea4-9352-2ec1e4efae7.html

Wahpeton Zoo Hosts White Bison

(From The Rapid City Journal)

A zoo in North Dakota has acquired a new animal that's considered spiritually significant in several Native American religions.

The Chahinkapa Zoo in Wahpeton received a white bison named Ska on Sept. 10 from a ranch in Selfridge, the Wahpeton Daily News reported.

"We had done animal exchanges with Mr. Fischer, a gentleman who has a reputable heart," said Kathy Diekman, zoo director. "We're very fortunate to have Ska."

Diekman said she is proud and pleased the zoo can continue to spread North Dakota's rich heritage by celebrating the bison.

"There's great education opportunities, great enrichment opportunities," Diekman said. "Everything just seems to be a great fit."

The male yearling bison's name comes from the Native American word for white. Tom Schmaltz, zoo curator, said Ska is unique because he's the product of recessive genes. White bison are rare, but Ska isn't considered a true albino because he doesn't have pink eyes. "Albino bison have a lot of health issues," Diekman continued. "We just think Ska is absolutely gorgeous."

Read more. http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/wahpeton-zoo-hosts-white-bison/article_55144a62-c892-5a0b-8dee-06488e01c24c.html

Bison roundup set for week of Oct. 16

(From The Missoulian)

A change in weather has brought a change in plans for the annual bison roundup at the National Bison Range.

This year's big event was delayed due to an extended bout of high fire danger that kept Bison Range employees from completing the maintenance work necessary to prepare for the annual roundup.

After fire restrictions for the area were lifted last Wednesday, National Bison Range manager Jeff King made the call to reschedule the roundup that's so important in ensuring the health of the herd.

Unlike years past, this roundup — set for the week of Oct. 16 — will be a low-key event.

“We won’t have any of the public activities that people are used to seeing,” King said. “There won’t be any school groups there, but if people want to come to observe, they’re welcome.” So far, King said no specific day has been set in stone.

“We still have to get out there and repair some fence to ensure there are no holes where the bison might escape,” he said. “We’re going to have to play it by ear.”

The annual roundup includes a few days of gathering the herd, which is scattered across the 19,000-acre range, into smaller pastures where they can eventually be driven into the corrals so biologists can accomplish their annual monitoring work.

Read more. http://missoulian.com/news/local/bison-roundup-set-for-week-of-oct/article_f4d1effb-1a62-5eb5-99e5-91eb41bdae59.html

Wild Bison Killed After Wandering Across Border into Germany

(From The New York Times)

Last week, a rare wild bison was spotted wandering alone near the town of Lebus in eastern Germany. A local official, alarmed that the animal could be dangerous, ordered hunters to shoot it and one of them did, using a rifle to kill an animal that had not freely roamed Germany for several hundred years, conservationists say.

The killing of the mature male European bison on Sept. 14, which was [first reported by local news outlets](#), set off an outcry among conservationists, who have worked to protect the species and increase its population. The World-Wide Fund for Nature in Germany has begun a lawsuit against the local official who gave the order, Heiko Friedemann, setting off a state investigation before it goes to court.

The bison had been seen wandering in a forest in Poland, just over the border from Lebus, before it crossed the Oder River into Germany and approached the town, Moritz Klose, a WWF policy director, said in an interview.

“The people from the local city administration basically freaked out and said, ‘There is a free-roaming bison, it is probably dangerous and I guess we need to shoot it,’” he said.

“I think the authorities from Germany and Poland — there is not good coordination,” Mr. Klose said. “They should have known there is a bison roaming on the other side of the river, and apparently there was no such exchange.”

But, he added: “It all happened really quickly.”

Mr. Friedemann, the administrative director of Lebus, could not be reached by email or telephone on Wednesday. But [he was quoted by the German news organization RBB24](#) as saying that he had made the decision to shoot when he was informed that the animal could be dangerous.

European bison, also known as wisent, are [listed as vulnerable, or at risk of extinction](#), by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, whose Red List is the world’s most

comprehensive inventory of threatened plant and animal species. They are native to Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine, according to the I.U.C.N. Read more. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/world/europe/bison-germany.html>

Will individual animal ID continue to increase?

(From Beef Magazine)

Last week's Industry At A Glance introduced some data from the 2016 National Beef Quality Audit (NBQA). The audits were established to, "...[deliver] a set of guideposts and measurements for helping cattle producers and others determine quality conformance of the U.S. beef supply," as described by NCBA's Beef Quality Assurance Advisory Board. NBQA's premise is based on principles outlined by Edwards Deming - most notably, continual improvement requires objective, fact-based decision making. Data is requisite to making proper adjustments for improvement to occur.

Over the years, NBQA has enabled the industry to objectively assess what's occurring in terms of the cattle mix and stakeholder perceptions. As part of the endeavor, this week's graph provides some insight into individual animal identification trends over the past 10 years or so. It's clear the use of individual identification has increased since 2005.

For example, 10 years ago, only 3.5% of the cattle possessed an electronic tag. That's now closer to 17%. Meanwhile, the percentage of animals that possess no ID is half the rate of 10 years ago, although the 2016 analysis shows that 4.4% of cattle still aren't individually identified. Those trends aren't surprising given the increased emphasis within the industry on value-added programs and the necessity for more careful record keeping. The real question becomes the trend in the future.

Full text:

<http://www.beefmagazine.com/management/will-individual-animal-id-continue-increase>

Researchers aim to improve gut health of livestock animals

(From Phys.org)

Researchers at the University of Delaware are looking into what causes that gut feeling in livestock animals such as cows and chickens.

Ryan Arsenault, assistant professor in the Department of Animal and Food Sciences in UD's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR), arrived at UD in 2015 and since that time, he has worked to set up a lab looking specifically at the gut health of production livestock animals.

Members of Arsenault's lab-specifically Bridget Aylward, a doctoral level student in CANR, and Casey Johnson, a Master's level student in CANR-have presented their findings at international conferences such as the European Symposium on Poultry Nutrition in Spain as well as Keystone conferences in Banff, Canada and Dublin, Ireland.

Arsenault said that gut health is a big topic in agriculture as many researchers are looking for alternatives to antibiotics which are almost all focused on the gut.

"We can't use antibiotics like we used to in food animals," said Arsenault. "Antibiotics have been used in animal agriculture to keep animals disease free and grow larger. In Europe, it's totally gone, has been for years and years, and it's getting pulled more and more from the American market so things like probiotics, pre-biotics, post-biotics, feed additives and feed enzymes, everyone's looking at those as this silver bullet to solve the antibiotic alternative issue." Many of his research projects are funded by industry and look at mode of action and mechanisms for antibiotic alternatives such as yeast cell wall extracts, feed enzymes and feed modifiers.

Full text:

<https://phys.org/news/2017-09-aim-gut-health-livestock-animals.html>

Environmental Quality Incentives Program in Missouri

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has announced the cut-off date to apply for fiscal year 2018 funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in Missouri. EQIP allows farmers, ranchers, forestland managers, and landowners to conserve natural resources by making available financial assistance to improve soil, water, air, plants, animals, and related resources.

Applications for several initiatives are included in this cut-off date: On-Farm Energy, Seasonal High Tunnel, Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project, Organic, Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds, and National Water Quality. In addition, assistance through nine Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects will also be available.

Applications must be filed by November 17, 2017, to be eligible for the next round of funding.

Read more.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/mo/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1343046>

Top Trends Identified at Expo East

(From Sustainable Foods News)

Expo East, the nation's second largest natural food trade show, wrapped up in mid-September, and the organizers at New Hope, the show's organizers, identified their top trends at this year's events.

The Top 10 Trends

1. **The Plant Revolution:** Environmental and health concerns related to the production and consumption of animal products has moved purposefully plant-based foods, once relegated to the vegan and vegetarian minority, mainstream. Innovative new meat and dairy alternatives improve upon taste and texture, therefore widening the appeal of a plant-based way of eating.
2. **Wholegrarian Shopper:** Taking a back-to-basics approach to health, brands across food, beverage, supplements and personal care continue to meet consumer demand for products with pronounceable ingredients and minimal or alternative processing.

3. **Protein Redefined:** The next generation of protein products emphasizes quality and transparency, with claims like grass-fed and organic, or utilizes interesting or blended sources of proteins.
4. **Inherently Functional:** The newest products spin adaptogenic herbs and other naturally functional ingredients like maca and mushrooms into snacks, treats, supplements and even beauty products that address the modern lifestyle concerns of stress and vitality.
5. **Probiotics 2:** Probiotics, it is being discovered, are for more than just digestive health. The evolution of science around the role of the microbiome in human health is leading to higher bacteria counts in products, probiotic strains that target specific health benefits and a better understanding of the role of prebiotics.
6. **The Verified Brand:** Smart brands earn consumer trust by telling the story of their purpose and demonstrating that they use safe, fair and environmentally friendly practices. Emerging certification programs being adopted by natural brands—like Glyphosate Residue Free, Demeter Biodynamic, Made Safe and C.L.E.A.N—move further down the supply chain to address safety and ingredient integrity.
7. **Nutrition Customized:** Creative delivery formats and formulations give nutrition products appeal to consumers of different ages with a variety of needs. The convergence of supplements and food, as well as an ever-expanding selection of age- and gender-specific supplements, are evidence of this trend.
8. **Getting Crafty:** Desire for clean ingredients and transparency are fueling a DIY movement among consumers, a la the continued rise of essential oils and herbal blends.
9. **Snackification:** Millennials in particular are fond of snacking because brands are tapping into their desire for creative, quick eats that deliver on both taste and nutrition.
10. **Sugar Vilified:** The war on sugar has reached a new level. Some brands are responding with products that are unsweetened or low in sugar. Other brands use alternative sweeteners like monk fruit or go back to basics with small amounts of cane sugar, honey or maple.

Beef. It Does a Planet Good: Study

(From Meatingplace.com)

Cattle raised for beef production play a key role in maintaining a sustainable food system, according to new research published by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

The research, published in September's issue of the journal *Global Food Security*, essentially counters claims that beef production consumes too much human-edible feed, finding that cattle are net contributors to the global protein supply, and concludes that "modest yield improvements" can reduce further land expansion for feed production.

FAO researchers created a global database of what livestock eat, finding that 86 percent of the feed the animals consume, most of it grasses grown on marginal lands, are not edible to humans.

This counters frequent claims that beef production requires a very high consumption of grain, — as much as 20 kg per 1 kg of beef produced. The researchers note that such high projections are based on feedlot beef production, which accounts for only 7 to 13 percent of global beef output. It does not apply to other forms of beef production that produce the remaining 87 to 93 percent of beef.

As cattle scarcely eat what would be edible to humans, FAO researchers found that 1 kg of protein in meat and milk only requires 0.6 kgs of protein from human food, and the protein in meat and milk has a higher nutritional quality than the protein in grain that cattle eat.

The research also found that livestock play a key role in preventing a likely environmental challenge. That is, they eat leftovers from human food, fiber and biofuels production. "Livestock play, and will continue to play, a critical role in adding value to these residual products, a large share of which could otherwise be an environmental burden," the study states.

Read the full study [here](#).

Wanted: proposals for a small processing facility

(From [meatingplace.com](#))

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission has issued a request for proposals for an entity to develop, manage and operate a meat processing facility for the region's farming community.

The facility is planned to be a public-private partnership with minimum processing capability of 500 bovines and 2,000 sheep/goats/hogs and an optional ability to process additional livestock species including poultry. The ideal capacity is 3,000 animals per year, the group said. The contract will be awarded for a term of up to 9 years.

Funds available for the project are a \$500,000 loan that can be converted to a grant and a \$1 million low-interest loan.

Bidders must register online at the Maryland Department of General Services eMaryland Marketplace website at emaryland.buyspeed.com and search for bid number: MDTCSM31035090 Meat Slaughter RFP. Deadline for proposals is Feb. 8, 2018 by 4 p.m. A Pre-Proposal Conference for parties interested in submitting a bid will be held on Oct. 23, 2017 at 1 p.m. at the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative headquarters in Hughesville, Maryland. To view the RFP, click [here](#).