



National Bison Association

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Combined Regional Issues Paper – East

Herd Health

- **Vaccination schedules**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? Triangle 10, Calvary 9
 - When? Annually
 - Why? Vet recommends this for our area although we did fine for 13 years with no vaccines
 - How? Vet injects at annual roundup in fall when they are in the squeeze chute
- ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - When? - Spring (first week in April because that is about 6-8 weeks prior to when our calves are born) and Fall (end of Nov when the weather is cool and we usually have some family time off around Thanksgiving :)
 - What & Why? - This Spring we used Vision 20/20 for pink eye coverage, Scour Guard for pregnancy moms to help calves, Virshield 6+ for broad coverage, and Noromectin for dewormer. We use Safeguard pellets twice a year and rotate between Cydectin and Noromectin, which means we deworm quarterly. This is probably overkill, but it is due to us losing about 30% of our herd in 2019 to severe parasite infections which caused stomach ulcers and eventually chronic, debilitating anemia that was the final cause of death (this was put together by vets after reviewing necropsy reports). We are starting to get fecal samples throughout the year to track our worm loads. Our first samples were sent in Feb and came back with 0 epg count. We are sending samples next week.
 - How? We use a handling system with corrals to funnel animals into a squeeze chute with a head gate. Our squeeze chute is manual and built by Pearson Equipment. Our corrals are wood walls currently, but we are looking to make them steel with cat walks once we get a better feel of where we truly want all the gates, etc. We do all of the vaccinations ourselves, we do not have a vet come up to the farm. I consult with a local vet over the phone for prescription needs, for reports, labs, etc. We do all of the shots, blood work, and care ourselves. We do not preg check or draw labs for pregnancy verification; we cull females who have not calved two years in a row just prior to breeding season.
- **Parasite control**
- ***Thornville, OH:***

- What? Ivermectin Long Range.
 - When? Spring and fall and as needed if we see an animal looking “off”
 - Why? Parasites are bad in Ohio especially with our fluctuating wonky sometimes super wet weather. After the presentation at the EBA conference this winter we are no longer deworming every animal every time. We do not want to create treatment resistant worms!
 - How? In spring we use pneu-dart gun on selected animals and in autumn vet gives during roundup
- **Mineral supplementation**
 - ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? Redmond Bison 90 and Redmond Garlic Salt
 - When? Free choice Bison 90 in winter and free choice garlic and Bison 90 in summer months
 - Why? We are selenium deficient and the garlic is natural and excellent for repelling flies
 - How? Provided in a mineral feeder free choice or on the ground
 - ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? We have tried everything from our local WVU local mineral mix, Cargill, Redmond, and are now in the process of switching to a bison mineral from KY Nutri. We just got out load today actually! Switched over for a higher copper and selenium % This mineral is also impregnated with fly killer (flies can be bad where we are!)
 - When, Why & How? - We give free choice. Last year I did give kelp in the Fall per the recommendation of a wholistic farm consultant and vet: Dr. Will Winter. We also started to put apple cider vinegar in our large tire waterers to help the pH balance, soothe and protect the rumen Fall 2020. I have no data on this, Dr. Will Winter has his observations and write ups online, but it wasn’t expensive and I had lost so many animals in 2019 that I was willing to at least give it a try. Some of my animals will drink it raw out of a bucket! I cannot comment on a difference in my animal performance at this time.
- **Weaning**
 - ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We let the moms wean
 - When? They typically are weaned by March on their own.
 - Why? We don’t have enough land to separate animals for weaning. We have had very good luck with not weaning, we have fat happy calves and excellent re-breeding
 - How? Hands off
 - ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? - We do not wean, but I have found that some of my mothers will not have a calf the next year due to poor body condition going into breeding season with a GIANT calf still nursing. The calves look great though! I do not have weigh data on them.

Grazing/Feeding

- **Grass selection/management**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We have lots of clover, orchard grass, Timothy, fescue and other grasses that are native to Ohio. The better we manage the grazing the better the quality of grasses that emerge. We are planning to over seed some areas next spring with a grazing mix
 - When? Winter frost seeding
 - Why? We have some bare areas from compaction and old wallows
 - How? We will soil test, amend and frost seed with a 3 point spreader next February

- ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? I did not select these, but we have fescue, orchard grass, and a couple types of clover.

- **Rotational Grazing**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We have multiple hard fenced paddocks that we use to move the herd through some are 5 day paddocks and we get 7-10 days out of the larger ones. WE have plans to divide our larger paddocks as they re-graze the “candy” grasses and leave the grass they like less. Smaller paddocks and more animal pressure gives us better utilization.
 - When? Beginning Mid April through mid November depending on weather and moisture
 - Why? Grass health and parasite control
 - How? Observation and pasture walks tell us when it’s time. Also the herd communicates their wished to be moved by hanging at the gate for the next pasture.

- ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? We have pastures that are 2-11 acres for a total of 35-40 animals.
 - When? We rotate onto the grass when it is about 12 inches high and rotate off when it is about 4 inches high. This gives us about 4-6 weeks off of a grass pasture. We have two forested pastures that we feed hay on intermittently.

- **Breed-up conditioning**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? Save our best hay for last in the spring so that moms can get started on the gain for re-breeding
 - When? We typically start feeding the second cutting hay in March through the end of hay season. We test our hay to ensure good quality . Luckily we have 2 farmers that we obtain all of our hay from and they are very interested in growing excellent hay.
 - Why? We are a grass-fed operation, animals who thrive and re-breed on grass are critical. We have excellent success with breeding.

- How? Find hay from people who really care about their product. We don't have land that is ideal for making hay so we have the whole farm in pasture and bring in good quality hay
- **Terra Alta, WV:**
 - What? - I have flushed animals in the past due to our poor body conditions from parasite issues. We are not set up well to feed grain and I do not like to do it, we do not plan to do it again. We feed grain only to move animals or bring them close to visitors for events. We do test ALL of our hay now, going by site and smell has costed me condition this past winter. We look for hay that is consistently 14%+ in protein. This keeps all body conditions up in our herd all year around (3 in winter to 4+ in summer body score). I fed crap hay (protein of 4-6% protein, it was Pearl Millet that went to seed and looked like horse straw) for a month or so this winter due to a shortage and am now playing catch-up. I knew it was not very good, but until I got the sample analysis back I had no idea it was that bad!
- **Water**
- **Thornville, OH:**
 - We love it. This is where they water in the winter. In one paddock we have a stock tank with float valve that is fed by a frost free hydrant. We are currently working to install these in our other paddocks as well. We received a grant to complete the project. We are currently watering from streams in those pastures which is less than ideal. Also once the water project is complete we can divide the two large pastures
 - When? Automatic waterer that is frost free for winter and frost free hydrants and tanks in summer months
 - Why? It's a life changer not having to use garden hoses to fill tanks in the winter and bust ice. Worth every dime we spent on the unit.
- **Terra Alta, WV:**
 - What? We have a 500 ft well feeding miles of automatic waterers. We use green jugs, but have one ball waterer. We do not have them hooked to electric as of yet to keep them thawed in the winter. The ball waterer stays thawed slightly longer than the green jugs. We also use giant tires around 300 gallon tubs (to protect them for getting smashed by bulls!) We have a water option in each pasture.

Fencing

- **Thornville, OH:**
 - What? We use High tensile fence. Some pastures are 8 strand and 6' tall, Some are 6 strand 5 foot tall and our most recent iteration is 6 strand 6 foot tall and that will be our "standard" from now on. We have 3 hot wires...calf nose height, adult nose height and the top wire
 - Why? We LOVE high tensile as it is very forgiving when animals bounce off of it when playing or scuffling. We also have a lot of trees on our property. When a branch comes down on the fence it takes minutes to cut the branch off replace any popped staples or fix any broken wires. (You know unless it falls directly on a post lol)

- How? We DIY and rent a skid steer mounted post driver to pound posts in this is the most stable for our Ohio clay soil. I use Google earth to plan and layout the fence , the measuring tool is awesome for knowing how many posts etc and I can do it from my desk instead of a measuring wheel and notebooks like the old days.
- **Terra Alta, WV:**
 - What? We have five strand high tinsel wire. Two of the wires are hot (I don't know the voltage at this time, I would need to run up to the barn!). We use wood posts and 12 ft gates. I have only had animals run through my gates, not my fence.

Marketing

- **Agritourism**
- **Thornville, OH:**
 - What? We offer on farm tours when it isn't a pandemic. Looking to get back to that this summer, we are working with local scout and homeschool groups for some summer education programs, we invite people to feed the bison on select days of the year which people LOVE and they subsequently buy lots of meat while they are there, we offer Bison Primer workshops for folks wanting get into bison ranching (sort of a what you need to know before you get started) We are also planning to offer on farm camping through the Hip-Camp platform by the end of summer. Lots more ideas we would like to implement if only I could clone myself!
 - When? Warm months
 - Why? We feel like we have the land, we have the animals and it's a great way to educate the public about how awesome bison are and why they should eat more of it!
 - How? I advertise primarily on social media and our website right now with great success
- **Terra Alta, WV:**
 - What? We offer farm tour coupled with a cooking demonstration and meat tasting. We just started doing yoga paired with kombucha tastings. And we do farm to table dinners and one BIG bison roast! We field harvest and roast one of our bison in front of a crowd with live local music and beers :) We also just started offering RV camping through Harvest Hosts and tent camping through HipCamp. We only have 4 camping spots available.
 - When? We offer on farm events April - Oct.
- **Regional marketing strategies**
- **Thornville, OH:**
 - What? We used to attend farmer's markets when we first started but now we are able to market everything through social media, word of mouth and established customers at our on farm "store" (a shed where we have our freezers and its decorated cute complete with a bison shoulder mount that people love to take photos with and pet), we sell to small niche grocery stores, a food truck, an online farmer's market platform and a meal prep service

- When? Year round
 - Why? Farmers markets are a great way to get started but it's a pain in the butt to drag freezers to the market every week only to be rained out or find that people have better things to do than go to the market. Selling from the house is awesome as I can get work done while I'm waiting for customers. Plus, everyone LOVES seeing the bison
 - How? I post our open hours on the website and social media and customers come pouring out. I also reach out to small niche grocery stores who offer other high end products. We have a really great ranking on google too so we get lots of business organically.
- ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? - we were the first commercial bison operation in the state of WV and we are the first meat producers to offer field harvested meat certified by the WVDA. There is one other bison farm now in that state :) I am a county Chamber of Commerce Member, Farm Bureau Member, a board member of our brand new Agritourism Association and a board member of a regional organization called Future Harvest Chesapeake Bay Alliance - I know some people now ;) Most of my meat is sold by word of mouth and through farmers markets. I have not been able to crack the social media or online store nut very well at this time...
- **Carcass/cut marketing options**
 - ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We do lots of ground and ground products as they are the best sellers. We do one-pound packs of bulk ground, patties 2 per package which is awesome for singles and couples. We do chorizo which is a Mexican flavored sausage, brats and hot dogs. We also do ribeye, NY strip and file as well as the brisket. In the winter months we will have roasts cut. I also get the bones back for dog bones and soup bones.
 - When? Year round
 - Why? These are the cuts that sell best for us I would rather grind roasts and such than have them sit in the freezer. One pack of ground is also more budget friendly than a 3-4 pound roast. We do offer prime rib at the holiday which has become a tradition for our customers
 - How? We have our animals processed under federal inspection. I have to transport two hours one way to get to the processor. There is essentially one processor that does bison in Ohio and they do an excellent job. When you have that much time invested in growing an animal a two hour drive is worth it!
 - ***Terra Alta, WV:***
 - What? - We field harvest our animals and have them commercially cut and packaged by a local WVDA butcher that is 50 minutes from our farm.
 - When? - We harvested 10 animals last year, but are on track to almost double that this year. They open their shop for us once a month on a day they are normally closed, but we pay for that...!

Local resources

- **Lending**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We have used the USDA microloan program for herd expansion and operating loan. Recently we graduated and now use a local bank for our annual operating loan and tractor loan as well as our credit union for handling equipment. Before that we self-financed with 401K and credit cards.
 - When? Annual operating loan
 - Why? The USDA is an awesome resource for beginning farmers and farmers who can't get funding elsewhere. Our current bank is also great to work with and offers very personal service.
 - How? Keeping good records is essential to getting financing! I keep my financials up to date so when it's time to ask for money I can get the application submitted quickly which is critical if you find a great deal on bison or other equipment and need to ask for cash fast
- **Grant opportunities**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We have unsuccessfully applied for an EQIP grant through the NRCS for the past 3 years. I did however write a successful grant for FACT (who included bison for the first time) this year to get our waterline project funded.
 - When? FACT opens applications for the Fund a Farmer grant annually in the fall, EQIP is on some schedule that I don't know lol! They just keep submitting my application every 6 months.
 - Why? Free money...why not!
 - How? Keep good records so you can quickly fill out grants
- **Veterinarians**
- ***Thornville, OH:***
 - What? We FINALLY have a bison vet who comes to the ranch.
 - When? Annually for our roundup and he also gives tech support via text
 - Why? We did okay on our own for many years, thank goodness bison are strong and healthy animals. It's so nice now though that we have someone to call in case of emergencies. It was reassuring when he visited the farm last fall and said how great our animals looked. We had essentially been winging it and relying on Doctor google, the bison handbook and our network for the past 13 years
 - How? We got hooked up with our vet through networking with other ranchers! Can you tell I'm a fan of networking?