



## National Bison Association

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### Combined Regional Issues Paper – North

#### Herd Health

- **Vaccination schedules**
- ***Rugby, ND***
  - What? Cow herd- Dectomax injectable, Calves- 7way, dectomax, virashield 6
  - When? At Annual Roundup in November of each year
  - Why? Overall herd health and what works for our program
  - How? Animals are run through the chute for health check and all vaccines are injectable.
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
  - What? SolidBac Pinkeye Ir/Pr Implants, Moraxella Bovoculi Bacterin, Lepto5
  - When? February/March for cows and Early May for young-stock
  - Why? Prevent pink eye and Leptospirosis
  - How? Inject in chute
- ***Gillette, WY:***
  - What? We give Mbovis to every animal on the ranch every year in the fall. The almost yearling heifers that we keep for breeding purposes or if we want to sell any get Bangs Vaccinated in the spring.
  - When? M. bovis in the fall. Bangs in the spring.
  - Why? We have dealt with MBovis before on a small scale and don't want to deal with that again. Our losses were small compared to what other producers have dealt with. It is pretty cheap insurance.
  - How? Run animals through the squeeze chute.
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
  - What? –
    - Calves - M. Bovisplasma, Alpha 7, Virashield 6.
    - Yearlings – M. Bovisplasma, Pinkeye, Anthrax (If in or transferred to South Dakota or Montana)
    - Young Animals to be co-mingled or into offsite feedyard – M. Bovisplasma, Modified Live Pasteurella, and BVD.
    - Breeding Herd – M. Bovisplasma
  - When?
    - Weaning, or whenever we handle yearlings

- Why?
  - All vaccines that are used are to combat issues we have experienced in the past or have identified blood titers for on the particular ranch
- How?
- **Sauk Centre, MN:**
  - All Vaccines have been killed vaccines.
  - Cow Herd: Gets a Virashield 6 +VLs annually- December/ Jan when weaning calves.
  - Feed Lot: New animals receive a Virashield 6, Ultrabac 8, presponse and M. Bovisplasma vaccine.
    - Personal calves will get brought in, hit with the Virashield, ultrabac and Mcyo and an injectable dewormer, then turn back with mothers. 21 days later we wean the calves, booster the virashield and the M. Bovis, and administer the presponse. Allows calves to fight the stress of the vaccines without also having the stress of weaning. This also allows us to match up mother with offspring. Likely limited to smaller herd sizes.
    - Purchased calves are the same program. Only difference they are left in a quarantine pen for the 21 days rather than going back alongside the cows. On rare occasion, calves come in overly stressed, we will post-pone vaccinating until calves are in better condition.
- **Parasite control**
- **Rugby, ND:**
  - What? Worming at annual Roundup and rotational grazing year round.
- **Eau Claire, WI:**
  - What? Bimectin Plus, Cydectin, Dectomax, Valbazen, Levamisole
  - When? October, March-May, June-July
  - Why? Keep animals in top condition by controlling parasites
  - How? Inject in Fall and Spring and mix in water in the summer if needed.
- **Gillette, WY:**
  - What? When we treat, we do a double whammy with Cydectin Injectable and Safeguard Drench.
  - When? There are 2 windows. If we are treating the yearlings it is in the spring typically. If the whole herd needs treatment it will be done in the fall. All of our animals that are going to feed are treated in the fall.
  - Why? We do fecal tests for parasites in the spring and the fall and monitor the parasite load. A level of load is okay it is if it gets to high that we treat. Much of our parasite control can be done through the grazing management and how we move the animals through the ranch and timing of the graze every year.
  - How? When they are in the chute
- **Fort Pierre, SD:**

- What? Alternate between various ivermectins and fenbendazols to reduce parasite resistance
  - When? Fecal samples are analyzed periodically throughout the year. If high parasite egg counts are identified animals are dewormed. If no or small amounts of parasites are identified no deworming is done. Time of year also determines whether dewormers are used. Generally no dewormers used from February to July. During this period there is a high chance of re-infestation so the dewormer would be wasteful.
  - Why? To improve performance (breeding, growth, etc.)
  - How? If handling anyways use either injectable, pour on, or drench style wormers. If not handling then an injectable product delivered through salt or cake.
- ***Urbana, IL:***
    - We found a significant part of our parasite control was nutrients in the diet (specifically Cu) and rotating pastures after treatment.
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
    - Cow/calf- December they receive an injectable wormer (ivomec + or equivalent). Tried to do a SafeGuard feed in early spring. This year we administered Long Range to all cows in March. Little higher stress to inject all animals but hoping for a better control on parasites.
    - Feedlot- alternate between injectable ivomec and a drench such as Valbazen. Will deworm everything new to the Ranch, but most animals purchased as calves will get some form of dewormer 3-4 times.
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
    - What? Merc Dewormer and balEnc
    - When? Dewormer, Spring and Fall / balEnc fly control in early spring then monthly as needed
    - Why? They both work great for our small heard
    - How? DeWormer crumbles mixed with their vitamins. The fly control is sprayed on them if they want to be sprayed and we spray their Waller. Some of our animals will come right up to the fence and let us spray them with our 2 gallon hand held sprayer.
- **Mineral supplementation**
- ***Rugby, ND***
    - What? Basic salt and mixed mineral blocks
    - When? Year round access
    - Why? Offer balance mineral access as the seasons change and bison nutritional requirements change.
    - How? Free choice range blocks
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
    - What? Purina Wind and Rain

- When? 365 days
  - Why? Provide proper vitamins and minerals for growth and fetus health
  - How? Free choice in mineral feeder
- ***Gillette, WY:***
    - What? Free Choice Minerals. Cafeteria style program. We also add a mineral package to our cake.
    - When? Year round.
    - Why? To make sure they are getting everything they need to be the best bison they can be.
    - How? Through the cake when we feed in the winter and when we flush in the summer. The Free Choice Minerals is a 16 choice loose mineral that we have out in trailers.
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
    - What?
      - Various Strategies depending on location. Very minimal mineral supplementation on all properties.
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
    - Purina wind and rain and salt blocks. Free choice. All the time. Spring of year we also include a purina stress tub to boost A, D & E in cows pre-calving.
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
    - What? Pellets Custom made at the feed mill. Purina Wind and Rain mineral Tubs
    - When? April thru October, 5 lbs. a week for per each animal
    - Why? Get them enough Copper, Selenium, protein, etc....
    - How? We save our Purina wind and rain buckets. Put them out in the corral and also made a wooden feed trough, we fill them up with a wheel barrel and use bowls to make sure they all get a chance to get at least 5lbs.
- **Calving and Weaning**
- ***Rugby, ND***
    - What? Wean in November of each year
    - When?
    - Why? Select replacements calves to go back out to the herd and wean feeder calves off for either sale or finishing groups.
    - How? Gate cut coming out of the chute during the annual roundup.
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
    - What? Pull calves off cows
    - When? December-February
    - Why? Get calves conditioned before shipping
    - How? Sort through the corral/chute

- ***Gillette, WY:***
  - We calve when Mother Nature says it is time. The bulls stay in the herd year round. We ultrasound in November and cull any late bred cows. The herd is pretty in tune with things. The rut usually starts around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with calving beginning in April.
  - We wean our calves in the fall of the year in November. This is what we have decided to do to meet our production schedule.
  - Calves are sorted off the cows when we preg check as they run through our working facility. Calves and cows are both turned out to separate pastures at the end of the day and are back on grass. Cows wean from the calves pretty easy. Calves have a little tougher time with it.
  
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
  - When? Various – Fall (Late Oct – Dec), Winter (Jan – March), and non-weaned herds
  - Why? Depends on the goal of the particular ranch.
  
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
  - Shoot for calves to be born April & may. Hopefully snow is all gone by then.
  - We use a 20% protein range cake summer months to flush the cows and hopefully get everything to re-breed.
  - Calves are weaned in December or January. Usually depends on weather, schedule and condition of the cows. We have had better luck with the finishing side of the business to have calves weaned in winter months than waiting too long. Better for calf health if they are in the lot and growing on feed before the spring meltdown arrives and stress of mud.
  - We ultra-sound preg check all cows every year. Cull anything open unless she is young or we have some other attachment to her. I keep pretty detailed records to keep a very strict culling rate.
  - Bulls are pulled from the herd at time of weaning. We spoil them and fatten them up until about June 15<sup>th</sup> when we kick them back out with the herd.
  
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
  - When? In the spring we have calves, and we pray that they are strong and healthy. However, for the last 2 years we have not had 100% calving.
  - Why? We think the young (2 year old) bulls get a little overly protective or excited, can't tell yet, and they push around the mom and baby, maybe even trampling the calf. This spring we have been watching much closer and did have to separate the heard for a couple days till the young bull settled down after one of the cows birthed. This year we also had a heifer whose canal was not big enough to let the calf thru, this is what the Vet tells us. The calf was dead in the mom, and we had to put the mom down. Currently looking for a new vet that has equipment to work on a Bison and that wants to work on Bison.
  
- **Genetics/Conformation**
- ***Rugby, ND***
  - What? Correct conformation is a critical piece to animal selection for our operation

- When? Throughout the development stage of calf grow
  - Why? Bad conformation can lead to a number of issues with calving ease, longevity, body condition and overall profitability
  - How? Try to see as many bison as possible. It takes time and effort to develop a keen eye for bison conformation identification.
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
    - What? Proper structure. Frame, legs, muscle, length, depth, width
    - When? When purchasing or selecting replacements
    - Why? To pass along proper genes to offspring
    - How? By carefully judging and evaluating every animal
    - What? Top plains genetics from top producers
    - When? Fall/Winter
    - Why? Enhance genetics and improve growth and development
    - How? Buy from auction or private treaty
- **Fort Pierre, SD:**
    - What? All ranches test for mitochondrial cattle DNA introgression. No replacement animals are kept that have evidence of Cattle mDNA
    - When? Tested after selection as replacement and before breeding
    - Why? Some data suggest that cattle mDNA results in decreased performance,
    - How? Blood, Tissue, or tail hair samples analysed by Texas A&M. Also several ranches have begun using DNA to determine parentage. The results are used to select replacement males and females from Dams that have proven themselves “stayable” (able to successfully reproduce every year for at least 5 years or more) within the environment they have been raised.
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
    - We simply keep trying to improve the quality of our herd. Nothing specific, just trying to increase in quality and size. Since we feed our own calves, we focus heavy on the animals that finish largest and finish in less time.
    - With having the feedlot, it allows us to track animals as they grow. It is quite evident you can pay more for good quality animals, and we do pay more when purchasing calves if they have a good growing record. On the flip side, we have had to decline purchase from other ranches as they don’t grow in our operation.

## Grazing/Feeding

- **Grazing management**
- ***Rugby, ND:***
  - **What?**
  - **When? Year round plan on grazing.**
  - **Why? Rotational Grazing is important for pasture and herd health as well as increase production**

- **How? Read as much as you can on regenerative grazing practices and develop a grazing plan for your land to be in production**
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
  - What? Rotational grazing
  - When? May 15 through October 15th
  - Why? Animal health, plant health, reduce parasite reproduction
  - How? Create smaller paddocks and move them frequently and allowing plants adequate rest period
- ***Gillette, WY:***
  - What? Year round planned grazing. Ultimate goal is for a plant to only have 1 bite before it is fully recovered. This doesn't always happen but it is what we aim for. Ranch has 85 pastures that we plan the grazing through. From first part of April to first part of November the longest the herd is in a pasture is roughly 10 days on our biggest pasture. Average graze for a pasture is 4 days. We also do range monitoring on roughly 27 transects where we monitor half every year to help track if what we are doing is improving things.
  - I use Maia Grazing to help with the grazing planning and record keeping. This is a fantastic program that is very beneficial.
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
  - What? All ranches practice adaptive rotational grazing at various intensities and animal densities. At minimum 10 pastures up to hundreds of temporary pastures with 1500+ animals on 10ac or less.
  - When? Graze yearlong with limited supplementation and no substitutional feeding
  - Why? Use grazing techniques that regenerate soils, increase forage species diversity, improve animal health and production, and increase the health and sustainability of the ecosystems on the ranch
  - How? Permanent and temporary electric fencing, fire, stockmanship.
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
  - Rotationally graze summer months. About 6 paddocks per cow heard and they get moved every 7-10 days.
  - We spread a lot of manure (bison mostly, but have used poultry) via a vertical beater spreader on all of our grass land. Also supplement in some commercial fertilizer as needed.
  - Winter months we bale-graze across the pastures that we graze throughout the summer.
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
  - What? We have 5 paddocks we rotate, summer prairie grasses and cool season grasses along with weeds.. (broadleaves) We have also watched our animals eat fresh green leaves off of low hanging tree branches.

- When? Every week in the spring, during droughts we leave 4 open all the time, we leave 1 closed for emergency backups and that one gets to grow more than the others.
- **Drought Management/Water MGMT**
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
  - What? Figure out how many animals the land can carry during a drought
  - When? May 15th through October 15th
  - Why? To ensure the animals have adequate nutrition for growth, reproduction, and calf health
  - How? Stay below max carrying capacity of the land and keep quality hay on hand for free choice if drought occurs.
- ***Gillette, WY:***
  - Just about all of the pastures are on a pipeline system that is supplied by several wells. Most of our pastures are set up in a wagon wheel design with the water point at the hub of the wheel and several pastures going into that central watering point.
  - We have very good delivery with ability to deliver water fast. Cell centers are either 4 big tire tanks or 2 21' bottomless tanks (silo sections).
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
  - What? Our ranches are stocked conservatively enough to allow for 2 years of extreme drought without having to destock the breeding herd
  - When? Multiple Drought triggers are set throughout the year that dictate the actions to be taken depending on the severity of drought
  - How? Retain yearlings on ranch to serve as drought flexibility. If drought present yearlings are destocked as necessary. On ranch feeding facilities are used to "slow grow" destocked animals so they can be slaughtered on the same schedule they would have been without drought. This is our attempt to keep stability in slaughter schedule and marketing.
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
  - What:: Pray for Rain
  - When: as often as needed.
  - Why: don't know any better.
  - How: Send mom to church.
  - – Currently still feeding hay because grass isn't growing. Will start moving through paddocks faster than normal to hopefully capture some of the grass. Don't have much choice other than to feed hay if it doesn't rain. All available land is already committed to pasture so don't have hay ground we can graze or an irrigator to turn on.
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
  - When? Happened last summer.
  - How? We keep a paddock as a reserve (keep them out and let it grow all season) we also have a little water hydrant we actually ran a sprinkler for several weeks during the



day that would keep a 200ft diameter circle greener. The animals would graze but they all did just fine on their own finding plenty to eat. I was more worried about it than they were.

- **Feed supplementation**

- ***Eau Claire, WI:***

- What? Free choice hay and mineral
- When? Year round
- Why? Provide balanced diet and minerals, vitamins
- How? Free choice

- ***Gillette, WY:***

- What? In the wintertime we supplement all of the animals on the ranch with 5lbs of hay per day and 2lbs of range cake per day. This is typically from December 15 to April 15. We also feed cake to the cow herd for a flush in June and July. Herd gets 2lbs of cake per head per day.

- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***

- What? All Turner ranches manage their herds to American Grassfed Association Standards for Grass finished animals. This allows us marketing flexibility for all animals. 2 supplement types used at present. A) Alfalfa cubes, and B) Sunflower meal cubes.
- When? Dormant season
- Why? We use strategic protein supplementation to increase forage digestibility and therefore increase forage consumption during the dormant season. Supplement strategies vary depending on the type of animals. Breeding herds receive very limited supplementation (used primarily as a behavior modifier, i.e. to lure animals). Young growing animals destined for the meat market are fed higher levels of protein supplements for longer periods of time in order to increase growth rates.
- How? All protein supplementations done with cubes/cake/pellets.

- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***

- Grazing months- most of our ground is various grasses, some has a small percentage of alfalfa.
- Supplement the 20% protein range cake post-calving to help boost the cows' diet.
- Winter- we purchase all of our hay, will balance between hay varieties to keep a good protein an energy diet, while also trying to not to spend a fortune.
- Feeder animals- Pellet/ corn mixture and grass hay, everything is free choice.

- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***

- What? Purina Wind and Rain, also started an ADM protein tub they like too.
- Why? The ADM protein tub had a higher percentage of copper, selenium and protein, along with other ingredients and it was \$20 less per 250lb tub then the wind and rain. It isn't as durable as the wind and rain, but we are still analyzing the purchase. Wind and

rain is tasty too and it provides the essential vitamins and minerals our animals need that are not in the soil and grass.

- How? We put the mineral tubs out in the low stress coral area so the animals are always comfortable coming in and out of that area.

### **Fencing, handling facilities, and corral design**

- ***Rugby, ND***

- What? Buying free standing panels and or portable bison strength panels allows you to rework your facilities to improve design, safety and efficiency without extreme labor inputs.

- ***Eau Claire, WI:***

- What? 2W panels, Portable free-standing panels, Guard rail holding pens, Pearson Chute.
- When? During round up for shots, weighing, loadout
- Why? Making handling easy and safe for animals and workers
- How? Some permanent and some portable moved around with skid steer or loader tractor.

- ***Gillette, WY:***

- What? We have lots of fence on the ranch. Most of it is electric fence. 3 wire electric running around 7kv. Lots of bite, this is the best to train the animals. Low juice and they get to thinking they can take the hit and don't respect the fence. We also use 6' tall woven wire fencing for some of the fences and in the higher pressure areas.

- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***

- We have two facilities:
  - Main Farm- 12 x 30 alley that leads to a crowding tub into two narrow alley stalls (one has platform scale) then chute.
  - West Farm- alleyway, two box stalls and chute.
- Corrals are all oil well pipe and sucker rod. Welded on site. 100's of man hours and 100's of lbs. of welding rod. Any gate that can see impact is lined with Steel. Trying to eliminate square corners where practical.
- Some of our larger pens have been constructed of panels. Be free standing pipe panels or a pre welded rod panel- more costly, but is more versatile and liquid.
- I have always taken the approach that it is easy to justify spending the money on a good working facility if you figure the cost of injured or dead animals. OR even worse the cost of medical bills if you get hurt.

- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***

- What? Combination Morand system, Squeeze Shoot, ally, sweep tub, 12x12 holding pens, lots of gates, locally made panels (12ftx7ft) from the Whitko High School Welding shop and also the local Amish Welding company down the road.
- When? Fall 2019/ spring 2020

- Why? Larry from Morand worked with us step by step designing the corral and he was even available while we were putting it all together after it arrived. Had the high school do the low stress area due to cost and shipping. Then Covid made it even worse since nothing was shipped over the boarder, we had the Amish welders custom make some panels for us to finish the system.
- How? Had to use front end loaders and a Crawler for the Morand and heavy Amish corral panels The low stress area was light enough two people could move the 12x7 panels, they were about 135lbs each

## Marketing

- **Regional marketing strategies**
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
  - What? Facebook
  - When? Year round
  - Why? Showcase our genetics
  - How? Post video and photos of the animals and pastures
- ***Fort Pierre, SD:***
  - What? We market 3 products.
    - A) Grain fed – All through Rocky Mountain Natural Meats
    - B) Grass Finished – through various partners
    - C) Live animals – Limited number of breeding animals sold through private auction
  - When?
    - Grain Finished = Year round
    - Grass Finished = May – January
    - Live Animals = January
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
  - What? We raise our calves all the way through to finishing. Wholesale most all of the meat to North American Bison, LLC. Do have several people that buy from us to retail meat, and we do 6-10 animals a year via halves and qtrs. And burger to two restaurants.
- ***Fort Wayne, IN:***
  - What? May consider doing farmer markets but currently host farm tours thru NE Local Food Networks, personal networking to restaurants, our website and Facebook.
  - How? Keep a customer list so when it is time to send an animal for processing we reach out to our current customers for orders.
- **Agri-tourism – Hunts, etc.**
- ***Rugby, ND***
  - What? Ranch tours
  - When? Summer Months

- Why? Ability to market educational tours and move product as an offshoot of the program.
- How? Connected with State Tourism Dept to develop travels tours through our area of the state. Make sure to have a good farm liability policy in place before you start.
- **Fort Wayne, IN:**
  - What? Farm Tours NE Local Food Network and we also rent our barn for weddings, graduations, baby showers, etc that gives us the opportunity to share our story and teach about Bison
  - When? All year, except if there is too much snow and we have no room to park guests
  - Why?
  - How? Web Site and Facebook

### Local resources

- **Financial Assistance**
- **Rugby, ND:**
  - What? Develop a strong relationship with an ag lending establishment.
  - When? This is an important thing to use for financial expertise and flexibility as your operation grows and cash flow or capital is needed for different portions of your operation.
  - Why?
  - How? Set up meetings with different banking establishments to talk with their ag experts to determine who is the best person to partner with and who can add value to understanding the needs of an ag operation year round.
- **Eau Claire, WI:**
  - What? Compeer Financial
  - When? Revolving line of credit
  - Why? Pay for supplies during lower income months
  - How? Provide balance sheet and apply through local branch
- **Urbana, IL:**
  - What? We have had some luck with a financing company called Compeer. They specialized in agriculture and may be willing to speak to this issue.
- **Local Tax Exemptions/Legal Issues**
- **Eau Claire, WI:**
  - What? For LLC
  - When? At start date
  - Why? Protect your assets and for tax exemption and tax deductions
  - How? Work with your tax preparer

- **USDA – NRCS, FSA, etc.**
- ***Rugby, ND***
  - What? Great resources for beginning and established ranching operations
  - When? Get in touch ASAP with your local county office and develop a relationship with the people running the programs.
  - Why? Cost sharing, educational material, disaster assistance and overall operational programing are all at your disposal with these agencies.
  - How? Contact your local office and set up an appointment to talk with an agent in both the FSA and NRCS offices about programs and educational material specific for bison ranching.
- ***Eau Claire, WI:***
  - What? Grants from programs such as CFAPP
  - When? When they are available
  - Why? Assistance when income is low, or costs are high
  - How? Apply at your county extension office
- ***Sauk Centre, MN:***
  - We have used the Equip Program for fencing, cross fencing and water line installation.