



## National Bison Association

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### Combined Regional Issues Paper – West

#### Herd Health

#### Vaccination schedules

##### **Weston, WY:**

- What? Only for animals being sold – Ivomec, Ultrabec 7 way, PulmoGuard PHM-1. None for cow herd. Additionally, all heifer calves are vaccinated for brucellosis.
- When? In fall when working and getting ready to ship.
- Why? Reduce chances of sickness due to handling and shipping stress.
- How? Injectable when we run them through the chute.

##### **Enterprise, OR:**

- Calves/coming yearlings
  - What: Mycoplasma, One Shot, Alpha 7/MB-1, Triangle 5
  - When: January and two to four weeks after for Mycoplasma booster shot
  - Why: Protect animal's health from known diseases in our area. Alpha 7/MB-1 has a pinkeye additive, we have had a lot of issues with pinkeye in the past with our younger animals and would like to prevent it as much as possible.
  - How: Subcutaneous, animals are in a squeeze chute when shot is administered
- Coming two year olds
  - What: Mycoplasma, One Shot, Alpha 7/MB-1, Triangle 5. Additionally Heifers get Vibrin.
  - When: December
  - Why: Protect animal's health from known diseases in our area. Alpha 7/MB-1 has a pinkeye additive, we have had a lot of issues with pinkeye in the past with our younger animals and would like to prevent it as much as possible. Heifers get Vibrin to prevent Vibriosis.
  - How: Subcutaneous, animals are in a squeeze chute when shot is administered
- Two-three year olds and mature cows
  - What: Vision8 with Spur, Mycoplasma, Triangle 10. Additionally cows get Vibrin
  - When: December/January
  - Why: Protect animal's health from known diseases in our area. Cows get Vibrin to prevent Vibriosis.
  - How: Subcutaneous, animals are in a squeeze chute when shot is administered
- Large Breeding Bulls
  - What: None

- Why: Difficulty of handling

***Southeast Idaho:***

- Vaccinate in mid-November generally. Each animal will receive Ivermectin injectable, Vista Once Squared, and Ultrabac 8.

***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? None at this time
- When? This fall
- Why? We don't move our animals in and out of State at this time
- How? Plan to run them thru the Squeeze chute and inject them

**Parasite control**

***Weston, WY:***

- Why? Cow herd is isolated, in large pastures and in a dry environment. Do not have feeder animals. Also, have never seen a problem with parasites.

***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Valbazen (given to all animals)
  - When: During the same time as vaccinations. Three and four year old herd is also given a dose once during the summer.
  - Why: Parasite control is important to us. Valbazen covers a wide range of parasites, is safe to use, and covers Liver Flukes, which we have on some
  - How: Oral drench, summer administration is through water supply
- What: Long Range (given to yearlings and two year olds)
  - When: May before going back out to pasture
  - Why: Parasite control is important to us. Provides up to 150 days of coverage.
  - How: Subcutaneous, animals are in a squeeze chute when shot is administered

***Southeast Idaho:***

- Being in a very arid climate we are fortunate to not deal with many parasite issues. Ivermectin once a year does an adequate job keeping intestinal parasite at bay.

***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Ivermectin
- When? Pour on Ivermectin Dewormer in the Spring; Redmond Natural Salt Block with Garlic
- Why? Have both proven effective within our smaller herds.
- How? Put Ivermectin pour on.

**Mineral supplementation**

**Weston, WY:**

- What? Trace mineral blocks
- When? All the time, 12 months per year
- Why? Use blocks due to ease; probably would be better to feed loose mineral in feeders. In a dry environment, there is less soil leaching and grass contains more minerals than in a wetter environment.
- How? Trace mineral 50 lb blocks on ground. Generally, put out about 1 block per 15 head of cows

**Enterprise, OR:**

- What: Multi-min
- When: Any time animals go through the chute, generally during the same time as vaccinations
- Why: Advised by our vet as animals most likely do not eat the recommended amount of dry free choice mineral
- How: Subcutaneous, animals are in a squeeze chute when shot is administered

**Southeast Idaho**

- Minerals are imperative to the health of our Bison. We had a problem with white muscle disease for years due to selenium deficient soils. This is a common ailment found in ruminants and often goes undetected. It is not until a young animal experiences a great deal of stress will the disease manifest itself. Cattle ranchers in our valley experience the same thing. We now supplement with Redmond Bison 90.

**Buckeye, AZ:**

- What? Rio mineral Tubs for the breeding herd; Vitalix for the production animals
- When? Free choice year round
- Why? Get them enough Copper, Selenium, and protein
- How? Free choice tub

**Calving and Weaning****Weston, WY:**

- When? We do not separate the breed bulls from the cow herd. Calving generally takes place in late April, May and a few in early June. And there may occasionally be the summer calf, although this is seldom. Bull calves are sold so weaning takes place in the fall when we work them (generally late November or December). All heifer calves are ear-tagged, vaccinated for brucellosis and turned back out with the cow herd.
- Why? Heifers are evaluated as yearlings and determined to either be a replacement or sold as a feeder. Our belief is allowing the heifer calf to be with its mother while they are yearlings allows them to develop better and become better replacement cows. Bull

calves are sold as calves due to market conditions that do not make it profitable to run calves to yearlings.

- How? Sorting of animals is done in the fall when worked through the chute.

### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Calving
- When: Most in April-June, some sporadic later calves
- Why: Follows observed natural cycle for our area
- How: Naturally with no human assistance
- What: Weaning
- When: Late Fall/Winter when calves are at least 4 months of age and/or 250lbs+
- Why: So that our cows are not drawn down in the winter time. Calves are developed enough to survive on forage.
- How: Sort calves from cows in our corral system. If space allows we do fenceline weaning to help reduce stress.

### ***Southeast Idaho:***

- In 2020 we had a full bread up. Hopefully we repeat this year. We have never preg-checked our cows as the rate of conception has been optimal.
- Last year we did lose our first calf born on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Which is really early for us. We also lost a cow giving birth perhaps to over conditioning. This year our first calf arrived on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Which is late for us.

### **Weaning**

#### ***Southeast Idaho***

- After we cut our second crop and give the fields a few weeks of growth we'll run the pivot and let the herd graze on fresh clover. The high protein content in the alfalfa really packs the pounds on the calves. We generally wean in mid November. It may be a little later this year due to the fact we are around ten days to two weeks behind calving.
- Weaning happens as we work the herd. Mothers go back out to pasture and calves stay in the pens. Any late calves return to pasture. Separated calves will be on grass and supplemented with the same alfalfa they are used to grazing on.

#### ***Buckeye, AZ:***

- When? In May calving begins in both states. Weaning has taken place in April. Have had some problems with first time heifers calving. We are now taking the bulls off the heifers in April through July.
- Why? Had a breeding bull who really pushed the bull calves around. Decided to try to see if this helped.

### **Genetics:**

### ***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Buying only from known ranches for the conformation and overall improvement in the herd.
- When? October-March
- Why? Shows/auctions are going at full capacity and depending on what I am looking for, i.e., production animals vs breeding animals.
- How? Usually live which I prefer but with this past year, internet which has proven to be challenging, relying on someone else's eye.

### **Grazing/Feeding**

#### **Grazing management**

### ***Weston, WY:***

- When? Animals are rotated through pastures once every few months.
- Why? Pastures are fairly large and allow infrequent rotation. While there are definitely benefits to frequent rotations, our pastures are in rough country with lots of trees, breaks and draws which make fencing and water distribution very difficult. About half of the ranch is on land owned by the US Forest Service and grazed via a grazing permit. The Forest Service prefers no new cross fencing.
- How? Bison are generally moved by leading them with a cake truck. If pastures are adjacent, the gate may be left open for a few days allowing the bison to move themselves.

### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Rangeland Management
  - When: May-December/January. Three year rotation schedule: year one in rotation the pasture is grazed early, second year is grazed in the plant is fully mature and dormant, year three is grazed mid summer
  - Why: Protect the health of our grasslands- healthy grasslands provides more feed for our animals.
  - How: see "when"
- What: Irrigated Pasture
  - When: May through November- Grazed while growing and given a recovery period before grazed again.
  - Why: Protect health of the plant and soil- healthy plants and soil provides more feed for our animals.
  - How: see "when"
- What: Rangeland
  - When: May-December/January. Three year rotation schedule: year one in rotation the pasture is grazed early, second year is grazed in the plant is fully mature and dormant, year three is grazed mid summer
  - Why: Protect the health of our grasslands- healthy grasslands provides more feed for our animals.

- How: Larger pastures are broken up by cross-fencing.

#### ***Southeast Idaho:***

- Right now we are rotating our herd through four paddocks. Due to drought conditions I am increasing to seven paddocks to better utilize the irrigated tracts to provide green grass during the warm and dry months. One thing that has helped during these dry years is planning on keeping the herd confined until the grass gets a chance to grow. This year we are feeding from the beginning of March to the end of May in a drill pipe enclosed 18 acre pasture.

#### ***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Out production animals are corralled most of their lives and sorted out for harvest from there. Our breeding herd, depending on the state, are rotated from corrals to pastures every other month.
- When? Throughout the year.
- Why? Just to keep the grazing at optimum conditions.
- How? Moved with the tractor.

#### **Range/Drought Management**

##### ***Weston, WY:***

- What? Monitoring is conducted to track range health.
- When? Annually
- Why? To collect data for decision making. Also, the ranch is in a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances with the US Fish & Wildlife Service for sage grouse. This agreement requires monitoring.
- How? "Bullseye Rangeland Health" developed by Kirk Gadzia and Todd Graham, Quivira Coalition.

#### **Water**

##### ***Weston, WY:***

- What? Water is provided via stock ponds and wells. A pipeline is used to supply additional tanks not located near the wells. In the winter, the bison frequently utilize snow for water. Recycled large haul truck tires are used for water tanks.

##### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Wells, natural sources, hauling water in
- When: Year round
- Why: Much of our land has limited water supply so we must use artificial sources.

- How: Some locations have drilled wells. Locations that need water hauled in have large water tanks.

***Southeast Idaho:***

- Drought seems to be the Elephant in the room right now. Many of the issues that are addressed in this questionnaire are being viewed through the lens of drought conditions. This issue impacts everything we do and plan for.
- We just had the driest April on record in the Southeast Idaho. We irrigate three different tracts of land, two with pivots and one flood. This year has forced us to start irrigating a month and half before we generally start.
- We pump directly out of the Bear River. We have been told that water is not guaranteed through the summer months this year. This is forcing us to get a little creative with the resources we do have and to consciously plan for worst-case scenarios.
- We actively manage noxious weeds such as Musk Thistle, Hounds Tongue, and Dyers Woad. Bison love the flowers of Musk thistle and have a tendency to be super spreaders of this weed. Thick patches of Musk thistle compete with grasses and other forbs for water and nutrients. It has been joked that Musk thistle should be considered the state flower of Idaho.
- We are actively pursuing any and all solutions to improve the health of soils, grasses, and forbs. Even if these solutions fall outside of the cult of holistic management practices.

**Fencing:**

***Weston, WY:***

- What? Pasture fencing is 5 strands of wire. The bottom 4 strands are barbed wire, the top strand is smooth as it is primarily for visual purposes only. The top wire is 5' high, the next wire down (top barbed wire) is at least one foot below the top smooth wire. This is for wildlife purposes. The one foot spacing between the top two wires prevents deer or antelope from get a leg twisted in the wires and hung up.
- Why? The fence is not the strongest in the world, but with large pastures and no adjacent bison, it is quite sufficient.

***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Anything and everything
- Tall barbed wire, high tensile electric smooth wire, woven wire.
- Why: Hopefully keep the bison where they are supposed to be

***Southeast Idaho:***

- Currently using five stranded barbed wire fence for the most part. It is effective as long as the herd is happy!

## **Feed supplementation**

### ***Weston, WY***

- What? Grass hay and grass/alfalfa mix
- When? Hay is fed in the winter on an as-needed basis, which is very seldom. The ranch is in a dry area (13" – 14" annual precip). Snowfall is generally minimal and tends to blow off the hills.
- Why? Grazing management is conducted with the goal of saving some pastures for winter grazing.
- How? Hay is generally fed as big round bales, unrolled in the pasture.

### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Mature Cow herd with alfalfa hay
- When: Prior to breeding season and when grasses are dried out
- Why: Mature cows are on very dry rangeland, the alfalfa helps flush, provide protein supplement to the mature grasses, and prevent cows from losing body condition while raising their calf. Also to help draw animals to areas of the pasture that they have not used for grazing yet.
- How: Bales of hay flaked off of pick-ups

### ***Southeast Idaho***

- We supplement alfalfa and grass hay from January 1<sup>st</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>. Depending on where we need maximal fertilization, we will concentrate our winter feeding program. We have also been experimenting with silage and fermented feeds. The idea is to keep the cows in good flesh throughout the winter months.

### ***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Just Rio and Vitalix tubs. Otherwise, grass only fed.
- Why? Again, just to supplement for vitamins, protein, etc.
- How? Mineral tubs are put out year round and are free choice.

## **Handling Equipment:**

### ***Enterprise, OR***

- What: Guardrail, high tensile woven wire, wood, self-made metal paneling, railroad ties, free standing metal panels, hydraulic squeeze chute & manual squeeze chute
- Why: Used what was available and cost effective at the time

### ***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Hi Hog system, Squeeze Chute, scale and panels just being brought in for the breeding animals in Colorado. Arizona is set up with easy access for the animals to

come in from any of the pastures, down alley ways into tub to squeeze chute. Trying to duplicate in Colorado.

- When? In process in CO in lower pastures. Alley ways are easy for load out with current configuration of corrals. AZ been in place since 2000. Works great for loadout.
- Why? Husband set all of present panels/corrals/loadouts up. He had an eye for this and could always come up with a plan that was easily implemented. Now working with Doug Worland with Hi hog to finish up.
- How? Lots of hard work and we own construction companies. Both states we utilized all of our heavy construction equipment (drills) and man power to make a vision a reality.

## **Marketing**

### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Direct to customer, Website, Social media (Facebook, Instagram), Email campaigns, ranch visits, Farmers Markets, merchandise, sponsorships, direct contact/cold calls to restaurants, grocery stores, caterers, butcher shops
- When: All year.

### **Regional marketing strategies:**

#### ***Weston, WY***

- What? Bull calves and yearling heifers determined to not be replacement quality are sold to a regional feeder. Yearling heifers sold as replacements are advertised via the NBA Trading Board.
- Why? Almost all sales are live animal sales. Meat sales are small, limited to family and friends. Hunts are seldom, limited to herd bulls that cannot be gathered.

### ***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: Know who your target market is. Once you have identified the target market, build your brand and sales channels.
- When: Develop a schedule. Seasonal focuses. Prior to butcher dates/holidays.
- How: Free marketing webinars/workshops, Small Business Development Center

#### ***Southeast Idaho***

- Regional marketing is certainly something to really consider. One thing about being in the west is a lot of hunters and outdoorsmen flock to this region. In Southeast Idaho there are a number of high fenced Elk operations that also run Bison hunts. These businesses have been unbelievably consistent customers for young bulls, mature bulls, and cull cows. These businesses have a seemingly insatiable appetite for hunt-able bison.
- Another essential marketing tool for us has been bringing animals to the Western Bison Association show and sale. These regional associations are wonderful marketing tools that every producer should take advantage of.
- Our marketing plan is based on few objectives that will sustain the ranch into the future with an eye on growth. The simple fact is we are experiencing unprecedented dry

conditions. This dictates how we manage our herd and the land in which they reside. When moisture and environmental conditions are strained the land is fragile. We made the decision in 2017 to wean and sell calves between five and six months of age to reduce the number of animals on the land. Our pastures have markedly improved in quality even as the drought has worsened. Our marketing plan is one that considers a long-term outlook while consistently improving the quality of forage and genetics in the herd.

***Buckeye, AZ:***

- Regional marketing strategies: My sales people in both states are always in front of the public no matter the day or week. People forget you really fast if they don't hear your name.
- What? They are on all social media, cold calls, tv channels seek us out for interviews, magazine interviews, write ups with our Bison associations, on the road marketing; whatever it takes.
- When? Every day of the week except Sundays and then don't be surprised if we show up.
- Why? Again, People forget you quickly as we found out in construction if you are not in front of them on a routine basis.
- How? Customer lists are important but word of mouth is imperative. You have to be known for your great product as well as the customer service in order to grow.

**Local resources**

**Financial Assistance/local tax laws, etc.**

***Weston, WY:***

- What? Financial assistance for improvements has been primarily received from USDA-NRCS for various projects (water wells, pipelines, fencing, tree thinning, etc). A lesser amount of financial assistance has been received from US Forest Service, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, US Fish & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management.

***Enterprise, OR:***

- What: NRCS, Local Veterinarian, OSU Extension Office, Small Business Development Center, collaboration with other small/local businesses and ranches/agriculturalists

***Buckeye, AZ:***

- What? Write offs are important to keep up with expansion.
- When? Daily paperwork. Profit/loss statements. What makes you a profit, what does not.
- Why? Common Sense
- How? Using that common sense

