



National Bison Association

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Research Funding for Malignant Catarrhal Fever Vaccine

National Bison Association Priority Issues Briefing Paper

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Background

Malignant catarrhal fever (MCF) is an infectious, viral disease of many ruminants, including bison. MCF is caused by a group of viruses that belong to the herpes virus family. In North America, MCF is caused by ovine herpes virus-2 (OHV -2), which infects sheep with no ill effects and spreads to susceptible species like bison.

Bison, in fact, tend to be very susceptible, and deaths are frequent in exposed animals. The disease occurs as small to large outbreaks affecting adult bison, and typically results in heavy mortality. One outbreak in a bison feedlot in Idaho resulted in over 800 head lost, with losses in the vicinity of a million dollars.

The Animal Disease Research Unit, ARS-USDA, Pullman, WA, in collaboration with the University of Wyoming, continues to be at the forefront in continued work on MCF, including vaccine development. No vaccine presently exists to control the disease. The virus responsible for infection has never been isolated. In spite of these limitations, the ADRU and UWY have made practical advances in our understanding of how this disease is transmitted and progress toward control recommendations.

Researchers are in the middle of their current five-year funding cycle for vaccine development for this very important disease, and they are making good progress towards the development of a MCF vaccine.

Our Request/Recommendation:

A top priority for the National Bison Association is to make sure that the Animal Disease Research Unit has the necessary annual funding in the Agricultural Appropriations package to continue funding for research toward an MCF vaccine. We understand that significant funds were lost for this project through the recent sequestration process and request those funds be reinstated so that ADRU can continue their progress concerning this important research.