



National Bison Association

8690 Wolff Court, Suite 200 Westminster, CO 80031-3646
www.BisonCentral.com Phone: 303-292-2833 Fax: 303-845-9081

Bison Issues Overview, September 2022

Bison and International Trade

Background

North Americans are not alone in discovering the great taste of bison meat. Bison sales are increasing in Mexico, the European Union and beyond, with importers in Korea, Japan and Taiwan actively seeking the ability to import American bison meat into their countries to meet growing demand for sustainable, high-quality American protein.

The fledgling bison export market, however, is thwarted by a series of trade barriers. The National Bison Association commends the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), and the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office for working to address these barriers. We are particularly appreciative for the successful efforts to open Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for U.S. bison meat exports, and for establishing HS Codes for frozen/chilled bison.

The need for international trade is becoming increasingly important for the bison business. After years of facing a shortage of meat to supply the domestic market, the bison business began experiencing a slight build-up of some cuts last year. The disruption created by COVID-19 has compounded that buildup in inventory along with persistent drought and high feed prices.

Here are the key areas of concern:

UK Trade Agreement

As the United Kingdom transitions politically and reestablishes its trade relationships with the United States, we strongly urge that elimination of the 20% Hilton Quota Tariff on U.S. bison meat. We are encouraged that the Ambassador is working with the British Secretary of State to move these discussions forward.

EU Trade

U.S. bison producers continue to operate at a competitive disadvantage to their Canadian counterparts because of ineligibility to qualify under the High Quality Beef Export Program. (Canada is allowed to export up to 3,000 tonnes annually to the E.U. at 0% tariff). The NBA would appreciate an update on bison's eligibility in this program, as USTR Ambassador Tai said at an April Agriculture Trade Advisory Committee (ATAC) meeting that she recalled looking at this issue several years ago when she was beginning her work with the USTR. If, for example, the program was written to include "bovines", then bison would potentially be eligible for inclusion.

Elimination of this tariff continues to be the top export priority for the U.S. bison business.

HS Code for Bison

As mentioned above, establishment for unique HS codes for specific categories of bison meat will assist in compiling bison-specific export data that can help open new markets. The NBA stand ready to assist in the implementation of these codes, as able.

Pacific Trade

Following the detection of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a Washington state dairy cow in 2003, Japan and Korea closed their borders to all ruminant products from the United States. In 2006, Japan and Korea reopened its market for U.S. beef, but continue to prohibit imports of U.S. produced bison and lamb. This is particularly frustrating because BSE and its variants have never been detected in bison in North America.

Japan – We were encouraged recently to learn that there may be some positive movement in the FAS petition to open the Japanese market to American bison. It's important to note that bison marketers are already receiving an increase in inquiries from Japanese importers and distributors. We commend FSIS and FAS for their completion of the humane health questionnaire issued by the Japanese government. FAS has also informed the NBA that the Japanese government has signaled that they may visit a bison operation while in country for a beef audit, which is very encouraging and which the NBA is ready to assist in plant and ranch suggestions should a visit materialize.

Korea – USDA FAS has initiated the formal petition process to reopen the Korean market to bison meat. Importers and distributors in Korea have identified opportunities for building markets there. The NBA stands ready to provide FAS with any information/assistance needed to further this process.

Taiwan – We continue to receive information from marketers who have been contacted by Taiwanese importers interested in bringing bison into that nation. Please provide an update on any recent communication with the FAS post in Taipei on any developments in this area.

China – We are also receiving inquiries about the prospects for opening the Mainland China market for U.S. bison meat exports.

General Request

The access that bison producers/marketers have to foreign markets under international trade agreements tends to rest on the use of one term: "bovine" or "beef." The National Bison Association strongly urges our negotiators to use the term "bovine" on any measures dealing with tariff and other non-SPS issues in trade agreements.