

For Immediate Release Further Information:

Jim Matheson, Executive Director

P: (303) 292-2833, ext. 700

E: Jim@bisoncentral.com

National Bison Association Lobbies for American Bison Priorities

NBA urges action on Bison herd health support and Truth in Buffalo Labeling

July 28, 2023 (Westminster, Colo.) – Summer congressional recess is starting, and things are heating up for bison-focused legislation.

“We have two leading issues for the bison industry, both important to the integrity of our national mammal. First, continued funding for vital Malignant Catarrhal Vaccine (MCF) research and vaccine development, which was excluded from the recently introduced ag appropriations bill. Second, passage of the Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act- distinguishing North American Bison from Water Buffalo,” said Lydia Whitman, Program Manager for the National Bison Association.

The bison industry is grateful for the tireless work of the USDA Agriculture Research Service on the Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) vaccination. Over 15 years of work on the vaccine has resulted in significant progress, with the proof-of-concept study currently underway. Due to the relatively small bison population of approximately 400,000, there is little incentive for commercial production of the vaccine for use in private, public, and tribal herds. As such, the National Bison Association is requesting \$2 million in funding in the next Farm Bill to support the development, production, promotion, and distribution of the MCF vaccine. This funding amount was suggested by the leadership of USDA ARS who are working on finalizing this vaccine in the near term.

The NBA is also lobbying Congress to fix the ongoing regulatory issue of imported water buffalo being deceptively substituted for American bison and being marketed, in some instances, as "Wild Buffalo". Due to a regulatory loophole, water buffalo can be labeled simply as “buffalo” under current FDA policy, not “water buffalo”, which is clearly deceiving the consumer into thinking that they’re purchasing bison, or American buffalo, thereby threatening the food safety of bison meat.

“Owning a bison farm, I am aware of what it takes to raise bison and the many benefits that come with the production of bison products for West Virginia,” Representative Carol Miller (R-WV-1) said. “When a product is labeled as ‘buffalo,’ consumers usually think that product contains bison. “This bill makes absolutely certain that only bison products are labeled as buffalo and that any water buffalo products have their own specific label,” she said. “This will help consumers make better choices and bolster the American bison industry.”

The Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act of 2023 (H.3866), recently introduced in the House by Representatives Carol Miller (R-WV-1) and Yadira Caraveo (D-CO-8); and A bill to provide clarification regarding the common or usual name for bison and compliance with section 403 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and for other purposes (S.258) introduced in the Senate by Senators John Hoeven (R-ND), and Michael Bennet (D-CO), and co-sponsored by Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mike Braun (R-IN), Tina Smith (D-MN), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), John Thune (R-SD), Jerry Moran (R-KS), and Roger

Marshall (R-KS) will provide this much-needed clarification of terms for bison. Both proposals are supported by the National Bison Association and National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

“The diverse membership of the National Bison Association has helped create and shape this legislation, and now is the moment that we need support from members and other bison stakeholders to ensure this legislation becomes enacted,” stated National Bison Association Executive Director Jim Matheson. “We encourage NBA members to contact their representatives and push for hearings in the House and Senate on this bill, or better yet, inclusion in the next U.S. Farm Bill.”

The National Bison Association is a 28-year-old, member-based, nonprofit trade association made up of bison farmers, ranchers, marketers, conservationists, public herd managers, enthusiasts, and more. The NBA is based in Westminster, Colorado. Learn more at www.bisoncentral.com, and @nationalbison.