



National Bison Association

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Malignant Catarrhal Fever Vaccine Funding Request – July 2023

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, with fatal results.

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. This team has worked on a safe and effective vaccine for over 12 years and is close to succeeding, as they finalize a proof of concept study for the project.

Working with ARS, we have estimated that \$2 million in funding from Title VII - Research in the next Farm Bill would effectively develop, manufacture, promote and distribute a vaccine to not only commercial bison operations, but also tribal and conservation herds across the United States. Due to the small bison population, there is little incentive for commercial production of the vaccine, which is approximately 12 years in the making. The National Bison Association is advocating for continued funding for vaccine research, and federally supported vaccine development so MCF can be left in the history books.

Our Request/Recommendation:

Appropriate \$2 million in Title VII of the 2023 Farm Bill to develop, manufacture, promote, and distribute an MCF bison vaccine, to be overseen by USDA ARS and the National Bison Association.