

Montana Bison News

A newsletter from the Montana Bison Association

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Fall 2019 Edition

Edited and Produced by Allthingsbison.com

Announcing the MBA Winter Conference January 3 - 4 2020 in Bozeman, Montana

Program to include:

John Flocchini: Current state of Bison Market:
What caused the drop in prices, how long do you expect market to stay flat, and where do you think the market will be in 2 years?

Jonathan Sepp and Brittany Masters: How to sell bison in a down market and how to retain a faithful customer.

Dave Hunter: Hard lessons learned while trying to keep bison alive.

Montana Raptor Raptor Center: Live owl and hawk ambassadors will be brought in for a talk about our wild bird life in Montana.

Jim Matheson: The National Bison Association assistant director will provide a presentation on the all new Bison Producer's App, the first bison-specific field management app of its kind, and will provide an update from the National Bison Association.

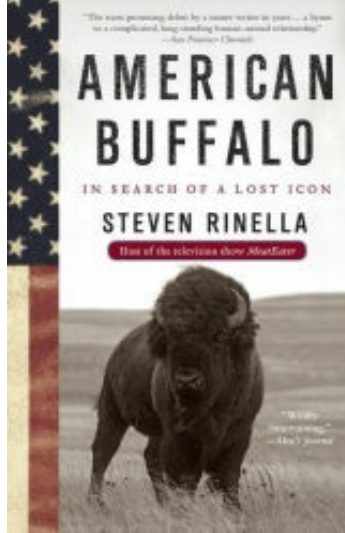
NEW - Silent Auction: Same fun --- not so long!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER - Steve Rinella : Host of the Netflix Original series, MeatEater, and the top-ranked MeatEater Podcast. Author of : American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon, and the bestselling, MeatEater Fish and Game Cookbook: Recipes and Techniques for Every Hunter and Angler. Books will be available for purchase and to sign.

See a conference agenda [here](#). Get all the details and register online [here](#).

A block of rooms have been reserved at the Gran Tree, which are being offered at \$97/night for room with 2 Queen beds or large King Bed. Room reservations need to be made by Dec 10TH, may begin to releasing room after this date. Please call the reservation line at 844-259-4417 and reference the Montana Bison Association to receive the group rate.





[Learn More and Register Here](#)

President's Corner - Roland Kroos

Anticipating a correction in the Bison Market this fall

The last couple of months, I have had the opportunity to travel thru most of the northern Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. This region was blessed with abundant moisture and moderate summer temperatures. This allowed most bison ranches to produce abundant forage for their herds. In July, I had the opportunity to attend the NBA Summer Conference held in Bismarck, ND. In visiting with several bison producers and those involved with selling bison meat to the public, they reported to me a significant softening in the market. Several people told me that they expect bison prices to drop 20-30% this fall. For the cow-calf producer, the drop-in prices could be even larger.

If, we see this kind of correction in the bison market, how will it impact your operation? Bison producers have enjoyed a rising market for almost 10 years. I've cautioned several beginning bison producers when creating their business plans to anticipate such a correction in the market. Most bison producers believe they are producing products for a very small niche market. However, even niche markets operate on a basis of SUPPLY & DEMAND.

We've hit a point where currently supply has exceeded demand. There are several signs of this happening within the bison industry. Even last fall I heard reports of producers struggling to find markets for their cull animals. I've heard processors are slowing down –reducing the number they are killing because inventory is building up in their warehouses. The ripple effect of this is that bison in feedlots or pastures are getting heavier as kill dates are pushed back. To

Chris D. Bechtold

Ranch General Manager



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move this product, retail prices will have to come down.

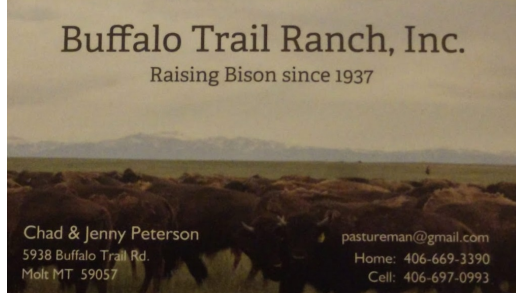
Now is the time to look at and challenge some of your production protocols. It may have made economic sense in previous years to provide supplemental feed to your bison herd when prices were sky high. However, if we see a 30% correction in price, the return on this feed may no longer be positive. Brainstorm ways you can reduce cost of production, eliminate/reduce overhead expenditures.

Bison have some wonderful natural attributes that allow them to reproduce, produce a calf and grow with nominal inputs. However, we continue to think bigger is better and the faster this animal gains weight, the more profitable we will be. By mimicking many cattle production protocols, we continue to shift genetic selection to become more like today's cattle breeds. The niche that today's bison producers enjoy could disappear if we greatly change the character and the natural attributes of this animal.

If prices do drop 20-30%, these lower prices will allow opportunities for new producers to get into the bison business or an existing operation to expand. I have several clients who are looking at buying more heifers or bred cows this fall. By improving their grazing management, they have the ability to increase their bison herd 30-50%.

Marketing your bison! I've run out of room and time however; it may be time for us all to dust off how we market our products. With the high prices we've enjoyed, I suspect some of us got lazy and we invested very little time into marketing or creating a unique BRAND. Speaking from experience, I do know that it is very difficult to create a market overnight. In the next newsletter, we plan to discuss MARKETING.

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Rest in Peace - Jerry "Buzz" Nyhart

The Montana Bison Association was saddened to hear that Jerry "Buzz" Nyhart passed away on October 16.

Jerry was a long time member of the National Bison Association & The Montana Bison Association. The Nyharts generously hosted a Montana Bison Association ranch tour back in 2014. Here's a shot of Buzz with his favorite cow. (Photo credit-Roland Kroos).



Rest in peace.

Montana Bison Featured in Art Show



The opening of a combined art show featuring: Jennifer Olsson's bison trimmed capes, and Marlene Nielsen Lavenlay's Montana inspired photographs, was held at the Old Main Gallery, Bozeman, MT.

A board member of the Montana Bison Association, Jennifer creates unique one-of-a-kind clothing and wearable art using bison fibers for knitwear, and bison "fur" for trims on a variety of capes and coats. For the show she created a series of five wild bird capes: Eagle, Crane, Great Gray Owl, Magpie, and Raven. Hand sewn and beaded, these wool capes have been described as "making you feel regal."

The bison used came from Montana ranches, and were stretched, fleshed, and processed by Jennifer. If you're in Bozeman, stop in and see the show now through December, or go to www.oldmaingallery.com www.mtbisonfashionfurs.com for more information.



Werifesteria
GROUP EXHIBITION:
Jennifer Olsson &
Marlene Nilsen Lavenlay

Opening Reception:
November 1st | 5-7PM
wine • hors d'oeuvres • beer

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Feral Swine: Why Montanans Should Be Worried

By Julia Arnold

A stretch from the typical bison article, the feral swine deserves the bison producers' attention. Montana is currently feral swine free, but the concern looms very near. Invasive swine have been spotted recently in both Saskatchewan and Alberta near the Montana-Canadian border. Feral swine in the State of Montana (also called feral or wild pigs, Eurasian Boars, or feral hogs) were originally introduced to the continent in the 1500's by explorers as a food source. These animals are not native to North America and have successfully cross-bred with escaped domestic pigs. Estimates indicate six million feral swine are now found in 38 states, three more states than just three years ago.

In 2015, the Montana Legislature passed a bill to make it illegal to transport or possess feral swine in Montana. The Montana Legislature placed the Department of Livestock as the appointed Response Agency to any Feral Swine "sightings or invasions" within the State. Placed in the control of the Department of Agriculture, the State Legislature emphasized the importance of listing this animal as an invasive species. Likewise, by not placing this animal in FWP's control, the laws are designed to protect Montana's native Wildlife by not in any way implying it is or will be an animal in our State that will have a designated hunting season. Penalties are stiff for not following the DOL rules; fines of \$2000-\$10,000 per violation plus department reimbursement for eradication now exist.

According to Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, DVM, MT Department of Livestock, the Department of Livestock is working in coordinated efforts with the Montana



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Fish, Wildlife & Parks Game Wardens and the U.S. Wildlife Services to create a coordinated response effort if and when a situation should arise. Representatives of these organizations solely may respond to a Feral Swine report. Although Dr. Szymanski did note State land owners/lessees were also authorized to eliminate feral hogs if spotted on their land.

With the Montana Legislature making such a strong stand, hunting or proposed hunting regulations will NOT be proposed for this animal should it find its way to Montana. Data indicates hunting, in fact, from all accounts increases the swine population in states which allow it. Dr. Szymanski is most concerned about two methods of pig introduction: walking across the border from Canada and from trailer introduction. Likewise, she indicated the need to change the perspective of the Department of Livestock from a response unit to a preventative agency in regards to this animal.

Montana is a mandatory reporting State and is launching a "Squeal on Pigs" education and outreach campaign. The State of Montana is launching this program with a one-day conference on November 18, 2019 in Billings. This conference will look at all aspects of the Wild Pigs including the National Perspective, Potential Collaborative Monitoring Program with Canada, present policy and research needs. The State "Squeal on Pigs" reporting number is (406) 444-2976 and the Federal report number is (866) 4USDA-WS.

Ryan Brooks, a University of Saskatchewan professor and presenter at the November summit, conducted a study in May 2019 showing the present hog population has grown about 9% per year over the past three decades. He refers to the Wild Pig issue in Canada as an "absolute disaster". At a recent meeting held by the Marias River Livestock Association in Sweetgrass, MT he likened his studies to studying the Sasquatch. Citing that this issue should "scare the hell out of you" and the last thing Montana wants is to be Saskatchewan and having to deal with this issue. Alberta presently is the only province with any state/government monitoring program. This animal is able to live in a broad range of ecosystems, snow is not a detriment and



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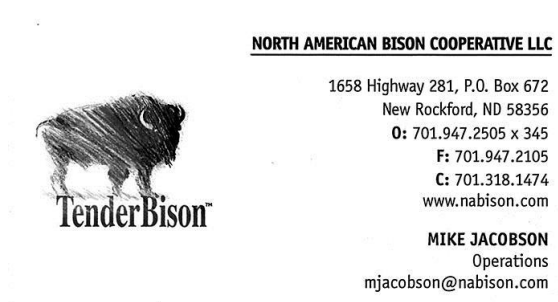
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topography will often replace brush cover. Reports from the State of Texas estimates that Feral Swine does \$52 million in damages to the Agricultural Community alone annually. Each year the cost of damages and efforts to control this invasive species is estimated at \$1.5 billion, according to the USDA.

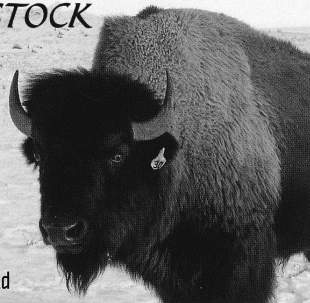
Beyond the threat to property and natural resources; the agriculture community and Bison producer should be most concerned about the lack of a definitive test that can distinguish between *Brucella suis* and *Brucella abortus*. With the lack of a definitive test to distinguish between *Brucella suis* and *Brucella abortus*, monitoring and control for the Montana bison producer and any livestock producer is placed in jeopardy. Additionally, Dr. Szymanski also indicates pseudorabies potentially could be a threat to the Bison Producer. Pseudorabies passes through direct contact can infect all mammals (except humans) causing convulsions, itching and typically death. If detected, a disease eradication plan must be put into place with the State veterinarian.

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LTC Tim A. Gardipee Recognized for Military Service

Montana Bison Association member and former board director, LTC Tim A. Gardipee, was nominated by Montana Attorney General, Tim Fox, as a Native American Veteran, worthy of attending a Conference at the White House on Nov.19th, titled: White House Conference on Supporting Contemporary Native American Veterans. Tim reports the following from our nations capitol:

"I was called and accepted, but would need a caretaker, air travel in a

WHEELCHAIR IS HORRIBLE. It takes experience, and knowledge, so my nurse, Connie Taylor, came with. The Trump Administration wants to respect and care for a veterans! Especially noted were the incredible Sacrifices of Natives! Many solid ideas, programs, and policies were discussed. We did the East Wing White House tour, and I have to say, the White House is historic, beautiful and so elegant!"

During the Conference, an unexpected visit came from VP Mike Pence. He thanked us, talked of Marine Ira Hayes, WWII, Battle for IWO Jima, the Medal of Honor soldier, Earnest Childers, and of course, the Navajo Code Talkers. It was a very powerful speech. I felt Mike Pence to be such a nice soul. He walked up and shook my hand, and I said,

"Thank you for being our Leader." he said, "Thank You! This quick 10 minutes lifted all our spirits, and a group photo was taken. It has been a very powerful trip, with lots of pictures for my FB Page. Thank You, Tim Fox, for this nomination! Thank You, Connie, for great handicap assistance!"



Raising bison: Dixon rancher fulfilling lifelong dream

From the Helena Independent Record

DIXON – A good portion of the roughly 115 bison on Chris Sullivan's ranch 45 minutes north of Missoula have unique personalities and identifying traits if you spend enough time around them.

"This one's a beautiful cow, with a nice golden coat," he said, grinning and pointing. "She's old. Over here, that's a good-looking bull. He's probably about 1,900 pounds. He's young. He's gonna grow a bit more. He's gonna get huge." Sullivan has been raising bison and selling meat since 2002 as Montana Buffalo Gals.



The name is an ode to his wife and daughter. Bison ranching was a lifelong dream for Sullivan, and it's clear he has a deep affinity for the animals whose ancestors once roamed America's western lands in immense numbers.

"They've been good to me," he said on a recent sunny day, feeding apples as a treat to the bright-eyed beasts as they snorted and jostled with each other. "We get along, and we understand each other pretty good."

Sullivan is a fixture at the Missoula Farmer's Market and is hoping to start a food truck next year to sell burgers, burritos and steaks. On 110 acres between Dixon and Moiese, adjacent to the [National Bison Range](#), he lets his animals range free on the pasture almost year-round. He uses no antibiotics, corn or added hormones. Unlike cattle ranching, he said raising bison is less intrusive.

"You know, a lot of guys will go in amongst 'em, but I think that's kinda silly," he explained. "Because they communicate with horns and certain signs, and if they want to and you're in their way, they'll knock you out of the way. Not maliciously, but it's part of their personalities."

His regular job is as a homebuilder, so Sullivan has to make time to manage his animals.

"It's kind of a one-man show," he said. "I don't hire any help. Once in a while, I'll hire help just to help me do fencing or something like that."

"Most of the time, I just like to be around the buffalo by myself. And that's kind of what they're used to, so they don't get too upset."

The animals come into the corral when he wants them to, he said. They also require less feed in winter than cattle and aren't as much work during calving season.

"In the winter, their metabolism slows down kinda like an elk," he said. "They don't require as much feed as cattle. When it's cold and there's a cow, and it's say freezing or below, you'll see all this steam rising off of a cow. And these (bison) have at least twice as many hair follicles and so they conserve their energy and they keep warm."

[Read more.](#)

Center of Excellence Establishment Underway at SDSU From the National Bison Association



Key leaders of the National Bison Association's Science and Research Committee and the National Buffalo Foundation are meeting administrators and researchers at South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD today to initiate steps to formally establish a Center of Excellence in Bison Studies.

NBA Executive Director Dave Carter, Science and Research Committee Chair Dr. Dave Hunter of Montana, Dr. Vern Anderson of North Dakota, and National Buffalo Foundation board member John Flocchini of Wyoming are meeting with more than a dozen key SDSU leaders at the University's Animal Sciences Center to discuss current and emerging research on a variety of bison-related topics, including:

- Parasites;
- Microbiome;
- Production systems and meat quality;
- Infectious diseases; and
- Vaccine development.

The group is also outlining logistical issues for the Center of excellence, including the physical and virtual locations, funding sources, and priorities for research and outreach.

A larger gathering of stakeholders is being planned at SDSU in mid-December.



Doug and Mary Stange, 2001 Chalk Buttes Road, Ekalaka, Montana 59324
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Damien Austin

Reserve Operations Manager

damien@americanprairie.org
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Bison Sale Averages

Please note, these are class averages (weight avg/price avg) from select bison auctions compiled by the National Bison Association. Please send inquiries to info@bisoncentral.com.

July 22, 2019 - The Nature Conservancy Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve - OK
Heavy 2 year old bulls - 795#/\$1,725
Heavy 2 year old open heifers - 694#/\$1,375

October 14, 2019 - The Nature Conservancy Smoky Valley Ranch - KS
Bull calves - 315#/\$964
Yearling bulls - 695#/\$1,075
Yearling heifers - 638#/\$1,406
Bred cows - 998#/\$1,450

October 21, 2019 - The Nature Conservancy Nachusa Grasslands - IL

Heavy yearling bulls - 714#/\$975
Yearling heifers - 534#/\$1,450
2 year old bulls - 948#/\$1,225

November 2, 2019 - Custer State Park - SD
Heavy 2 year old bred heifers - 996#/\$2,671
Heavy yearling heifers - 731#/\$1,700
Heavy heifer calves - 402#/\$900
Heavy bull calves - 410#/\$1,125
Heavy yearling bulls - 727#/\$1,750
2 year old breeding bulls - 1,130#/\$2,945

Bison Calendar of Events

- 11/25/2019 - Brownotter Buffalo Ranch Annual Online Auction - SD
- 11/25/2019 - Fischer's Bar 33 Open Consignment Bison Sale - MO
- 11/26/2019 - Sisseton Livestock Auction Open Bison Consignment Sale - SD
- 11/29/2019 - Minnesota Bison Association Bison Fundamentals Class - MN
- 11/30/2019 - MnBA 23rd Annual Legends of the Fall Auction - MN
- 12/04/2019 - Bison on the Bear Online Only Auction - ID
- 12/07/2019 - Western Bison Association Annual Conference and Sale - UT
- 12/07/2019 - Kansas Buffalo Association Annual Sale - KS
- 12/10/2019 - Northern Range Bison Consignment Auction - SD
- 12/12/2019 - Missouri Bison Association Winter Sale - Lolli Bros. - MO
- 12/13/2019 - Fischer's Bar 33 Open Consignment Bison Sale - ND
- 12/14/2019 - North Dakota Buffalo Association Simulcast Sale - ND
- 1/04/2020 - Turner Bison Exchange Prairie Performance Auction - SD
- 1/04/2020 - Montana Bison Association Annual Conference - MT
- 1/22 - 24/2020 - NBA Winter Conference - Denver, CO
- 1/25/2020 - NBA Gold Trophy Show and Sale - Denver, CO
- 2/6/2020 - DTBA Annual Conference and Black Hills Buffalo Classic Auction - SD
- 2/15/2020 - Prairie Legends Conservation Bison Auction - NM
- 3/05/2020 - Eastern Bison Association Annual Sale and Conference - PA
- 3/21/2020 - Missouri Bison Association Spring Sale - MO
- 04/03/2020 - Minnesota Bison Association's Education Conference

[See more bison events here.](#)

Montana Bison Association
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