

MONTANA BISON



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MBA & WBA JOIN FORCES FOR SUMMER 2020 CONFERENCE

The Montana Bison Association is joining The Western Bison Association this summer for their Summer Conference to be held in Kamas, UT (about 25 miles from Park City, UT). Information is available on the WBA Website www.westernbison.org. The cost will be \$100/person.

Additionally, the Buffalo Run Ranch welcomes you to camp on the ranch during the conference. Days will be filled with delicious meals, great social time, an educational ranch tour, and exploration of the area with additional information to be shared in early April.

The WBA will in turn join the MBA in the Summer of 2020 in Montana. Please consider joining the WBA and MBA for this fun-filled educational program.

Tentative Schedule:

Thursday, June 6, 2019. Arrive and welcome dinner at Buffalo Run Ranch

Friday, June 7, 2019. Lunch, Board Meetings in Afternoon, Happy Hour, Dinner with Silent Auction

Saturday, June 8, 2019. Breakfast, Ranch Tour, Explore Park City Area on your own.

Sunday June 9, 2019 Breakfast and Departure

Registration is open at westernbison.org/summer-rendezvous.



*Western
Bison
Association*



PRESIDENT'S CORNER WITH HERE COMES SPRING!

As winter reluctantly lets go of its icy grip here in Montana, bison producers are eagerly awaiting the arrival of spring, green grass, and red calves. As a ranch management consultant, I find working with bison ranchers unique and challenging. Though I find many of you anxious, most are remarkably calm. I've heard Dave Carter say several times the best thing you can do during the calving season if you're a bison producer "is go on vacation."

Some of the cattle producers I've worked with the last several months have been checking their cows every two hours during the entire calving period. Especially if they were calving in early March with temperatures hovering 30 below zero and deep snow. Unlike cattle, bison have the unique ability to stop calving during major snow storms. As long as you don't overfeed bison, they do have the tendency to calve in spring about the same time the green grass begins growing. Calving on a bison ranch can be filled with joy, satisfaction, and new beginnings.

Ranchers who have changed from cattle to bison have a difficult time letting go. If they see a cow having difficulty, they think they should be helping her. I know a couple bison producers who had to learn the hard way, they tried to help, nearly got killed and seriously hurt in the process. During calving it is best to have minimal contact with the pregnant cows or cows that recently have calved.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER, CONT'

The challenge occurs in trying to be a good herdsman, while simultaneously trying to be a good steward to the land. You need to recognize that if you leave your bison herd in the pasture too long (10 or more days), the bison will begin to overgraze grass plants.

As you can see from the photo to the right, bison are severe grazers and they will overgraze plants just like domestic livestock can. The only way to minimize or eliminate this overgrazing is to keep the bison herd moving. Even during calving, the bison herds of old, before we fenced them into small or large pastures, would be continually migrating. Due to the fouling affect and shortage of fresh feed, the massive bison herds were always on the move.

So, to create ecologically healthy land you need to create a grazing plan that allows you to move the bison herd calmly from one pasture to the next. It's been my experience almost every day, some of the animals in your bison herd will check to see if the gates are still closed or look for holes in the fence. As they find an open gate, I'm amazed at how quickly the whole herd learns about this open gate. Within hours I have seen 80-90% of the herd in the next pasture. The bison cows who remain in the pasture have recently had a calf and this calf isn't old enough to move with the herd.

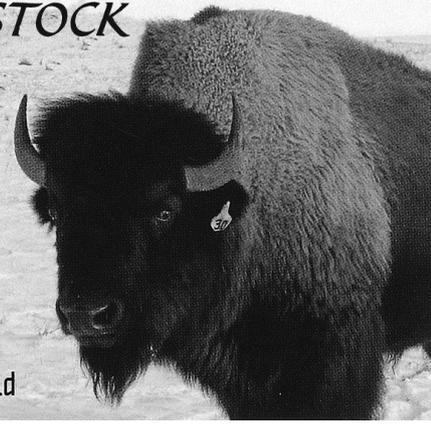
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER, CONT'

I find those animals remaining for the next 2-3 days are rarely problematic. In that the cow's desire to remain with the herd is still very strong. As the calf quickly gains the ability to travel with mom and most of the fresh feed is in the adjoining pasture, she quickly takes her new calf with her into the new pasture. One of the key facets of managing a bison herd during calving is that you will need to leave gates open for several days until you are convinced that all the bison have moved to the adjoining pasture.

I know some of you might be thinking I don't need to worry about overgrazing because I have a super large pasture, so my bison won't overgraze. I have yet to visit a bison herd in a National Park or Conservancy herd where I couldn't find some overgrazing occurring. If you would like to join me on a tour of Yellowstone NP or have me visit your bison operation, just let me know.

Roland Kroos, MBA President

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MBA MEMBER DOUG AVERILL INDUCTED IN TO MONTANA PRO RODEO HALL OF FAME -FLATHEAD LAKE LODGE PRESS RELEASE

Earlier this month, the 14th Annual Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame banquet took place in Billings, where the organization honored my dad, Doug Averill, with the Western Heritage Award. Every year, this award is given to individuals who have contributed to rodeo and the Western way of life in Montana. Now, as you can likely imagine, I've grown up with Doug and learned from him what it was like to live and love the cowboy way of life. There's not many men that still exist like Doug and to see him be honored with this award for the man he is made me proud and humble, all at once.

As part of the banquet, the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame did a write-up on Doug and we thought it would be appropriate to share some of the tidbits they included about him:

Doug is a third-generation Montanan who grew up with eight brothers on his family's ranch.

While he's had a rich life, one element he has focused on has been to share, teach and promote the cowboy and ranch lifestyle to families around the world as he welcomes them to Montana, Flathead Lake Lodge and Quarter Circle LA Ranches.

Throughout his 44 years of running the lodge, his accomplishments include bison ranches, tree farms, sailboats, restoring historic ranches, creating a 500-acre elk preserve and continuing to teach the next generation about ranching and the cowboy way of life.

He's received the highest civilian honor awarded by the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and has hosted military leaders from 104 countries on the shores of Flathead Lake.



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FEDERAL GRANTS TO BENEFIT BISON PRODUCERS BY CANDY WESTRE - BITTERROOT BISON CO. - MISSOULA, MT

Troy and I heard that federal grants were available to help finance bison and cattle operations, and because we had ideas about growing our operation, we began investigating the possibilities.

In November of 2017, we contacted, Dave Carter, of the National Bison Association, and he pointed us towards the; Value Added Producers Grant. So, what does "Value Added" mean anyway? It means using an available product or commodity and using it in a totally different way to - add value.

We contacted our local USDA office to schedule a meeting. The VAPG rep for Missoula, Heather Handeland, was so excited about our project that she encouraged us to apply for the matching funds grant.

Ms. Handeland helped us navigate every step of the process. We would never have completed it without her. The application was overwhelming at first, but little by little, we finally made it to the point of submitting our grant proposal. There were limited funds available, so not every applicant receives an award. You can probably imagine how happy we were when, after months of paperwork and more months of waiting, we were told that we had been approved! Be on the lookout for our newest product: Bitterroot Bison Bone Broth (wow, that's a lot of b's). This is something we have put so much work into, so it's exciting to finally be in the production phase.

Now that we've been through such a grueling process, we know it's possible to apply for a federal grant. We'd like to encourage others to pursue it as well. There are many grants available and the USDA is there to point you in the right direction. Heck, if we can do it, anyone can! Value Added Grant Information can be found at the following link:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants>



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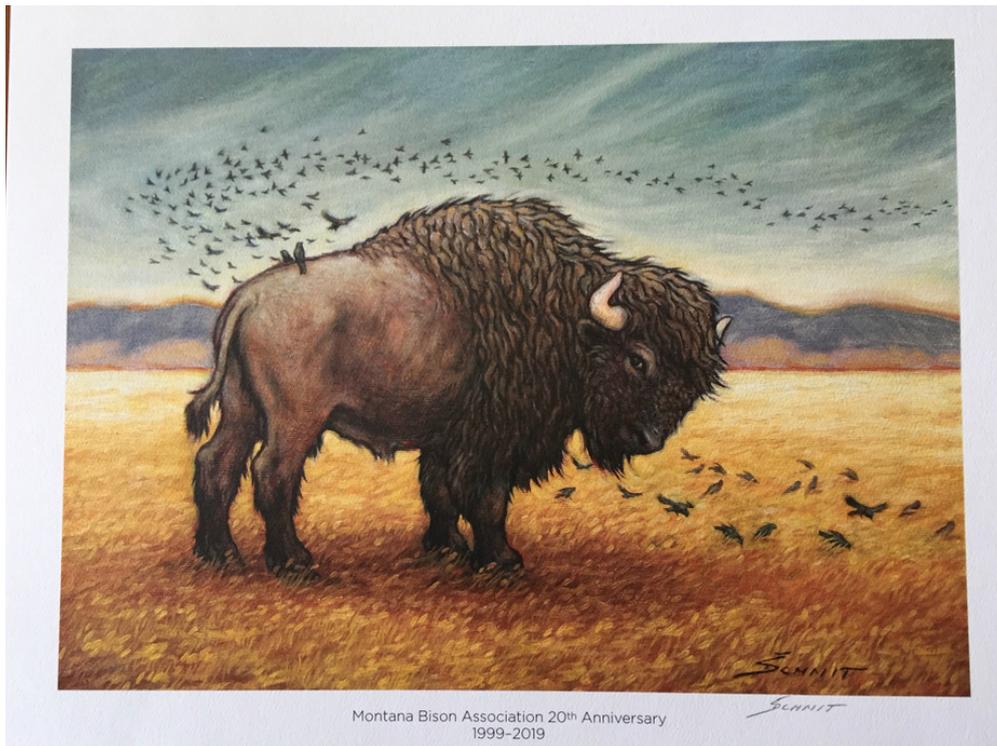


Ingredients: Water, bison bones, onions, carrots, celery, tomato paste, peppercorns, vegetable oil, garlic, rosemary, thyme and bay leaves.

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ART TO COMMEMORATE MBA'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY BY JENNIFER OLSSON



Montana Bison Association began their 20th year during their early January, 2019 Winter Conference, in Missoula, Montana. As part of the festivities, the board of directors campaigned to find a unique piece of art to mark this august occasion. After months and weeks of looking over highly qualified artwork and artists, *Awakening*, by Deb Schmit, of Cascade, Montana was chosen to commemorate the MBA's 20th Anniversary.

Deb began her life as a working Montana cowgirl in 1995, when she and her husband, Nick, put together the, Ten Cent Ranch; located on one of the oldest homesteads in the country. Together they run a small cow/calf operation of about 150 on 2500 acres. It is located where the prairie and mountains meet the sky. Square Butte, and the Rocky Mountain Front are frequent backdrops to her paintings.

As an award-winning artist, Deb has been juried into many regional and national exhibitions. She is a member of the Oil Painters of America, American Woman Artists, and the Montana Painters Alliance. She is a regular participant in the C.M Russell auction, held every spring in Great Falls, Montana, where she also maintains a booth at the Western Heritage Inn.

A tall woman, with a rope of braided blond hair, Deb is quiet and a little shy, but glows with warmth when speaking about ranch life and the inspiration for her work.

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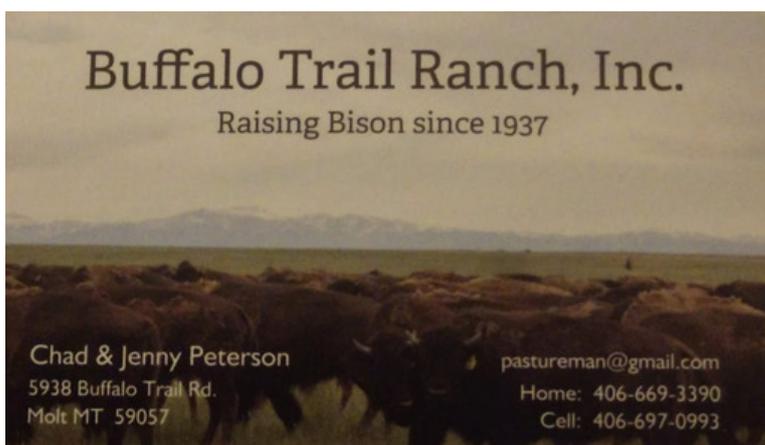


"I live in a region of Montana where the Blackfeet and bison used to call home. What I hope to accomplish through my art is to create a timeless document that tells a story about the emotional ties we have to the land, both today and throughout history. I want the viewer to look deeper than just the paint layers, and experience the subtle ties that connect us all."

-- Deb Schmit.

Awakening captures the image of a friendly, yet solitary bison, as he engages the viewer with a flirtatious and wise eye. A flock of blackbirds swarm into the scene welcoming the day against the chilly dawn-light of a morning sky, over a glowingly warm field. Two of the black birds playfully land on the rump of the bison, who is looking over his shoulder and back at the viewer. This image of looking back, yet awakening to a new day, felt just right to Montana Bison Association when selecting Deb's painting. In 20 years, a lot has been accomplished, and we look forward to another 20!

A limited edition of 50 prints, signed by the artist, on high quality watercolor paper, are available for sale. All proceeds go towards supporting the Montana Bison Association. Find, Awakening, for purchase on line at www.mtbisonfashionfurs.com . \$40.00 includes shipping within the US. There are still several available, but it is popular, and may soon sell out.



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REAL MEAT ACT GOES TO GOVERNOR'S DESK FOR SIGNATURE FROM THE NORTHERN AG NETWORK

Montana has joined the growing list of states to pass legislation clarifying the difference between animal meats and cell-cultured meats.

The bill sponsored by Rep. Alan Redfield (R-Livingston) passed both the State House and Senate and is now waiting for Governor Steve Bullock's signature.

The legislation has been dubbed the Real Meat Act, and will clarify what is hamburger and ground beef and provide a definition for "cell-cultured edible product." Redfield says he wants consumers to know where their food comes from and what exactly they're buying.

The bill defines "cell-cultured edible product" as being derived from muscle cells, fat cells, connective tissue, blood and other components produced via cell culture rather than from a whole slaughtered animal. It does not ban sale of cell-cultured products but rather requires that products labeled as meat must be derived from the edible flesh of livestock.

The bill does not concentrate on plant-based meat alternatives that are currently available on the market and in restaurants.

The growing list of states seeking to enact similar measures includes Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota Washington and Wyoming. Meanwhile, lawmakers in Illinois are considering a bill that identifies what a cell-cultured food product is and says that calling such a product meat or poultry is misbranding.

Missouri, the first state to pass legislation dealing with cell-cultured products, is currently facing a lawsuit claiming the new law is unconstitutional because it violates First Amendment rights for free commercial speech.

Zuri Moreno with the ACLU of Montana opposed the bill saying the bill is an "unconstitutional solution in search of a problem."

UPCOMING BISON EVENTS

- 5/8/2019 - Ritchie Bros. Bison Auction - SK, Canada
- 6/6/2019 - Western/Montana Bison Association Summer Meeting - UT
- 7/07-10/2019 - NBA Summer Conference - Bismarck, ND
- 09/24/2019 - Holistic Ranching Seminar - KS
- 12/07/2019 - Western Bison Association Annual Conference and Sale - UT
- 1/3 - 4/2020 - Montana Bison Association Winter Conference - MT
- 1/22 - 24/2020 - NBA Winter Conference - Denver, CO
- 1/25/2020 - NBA Gold Trophy Show and Sale - Denver, CO

NATIONAL BISON ASSOCIATION NEWS

POOCHES HUNGRY FOR BISON? NEW WEBSITE LISTS HONESTLY LABELED DOG FOOD BRANDS

Site Helps Customers Avoid Products with Mislabeled Water Buffalo

WESTMINSTER, CO (March 1, 2019) – The National Bison Association today launched a new website to help pet owners to select brands made with authentic North American bison, and to avoid deceptively labeled products made with water buffalo labeled only as “buffalo.” Visit the site at <https://bisoncentral.com/buying-bison-pet-products/>.

“As more people discover the great taste and nutritional benefits of bison, they are bringing it to the table for all members of their family, including their companion animals,” said Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association. “Our new site, entitled Sniffing Out the Best Bison Brands for Your Companion Animal, will help pet parents find products in the marketplace containing authentic North American Bison.”

The National Bison Association developed the new website after some companies have refused to fully label or disclose that the “buffalo” in their brands is actually imported water buffalo.

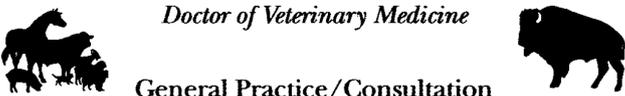
“Several pet food brands have worked with ranchers in recent years to develop products containing authentic North American bison. Many of those products list the ingredient as either bison or buffalo. Unfortunately, other brands are deceiving their customers by simply labeling their products as “buffalo” when in fact, they are using water buffalo, not North American bison. We want to help consumers make an informed choice.”

The National Bison Association is working with pet food regulators to propose new rules that would require an ingredient currently labeled as buffalo to be fully labeled as either American buffalo or water buffalo. Finalizing any regulatory change, however, is a long-term process.

“We want the public to be able to buy honestly labeled products with full confidence that they are providing their companion animals with the best bison products available,” Carter said.



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MBA RECOGNIZES TEAGEN ARNOLD FOR JUNIOR JUDGING AWARD

BY JENNIFER OLSSON

Teagen Arnold, age 12, won 2nd Place in the National Bison Association's Junior Judging Contest in the Junior Division held January 23, 2019, during the National Western Stock Show, Denver, Colorado. He is the grandson of MBA Charter members, Wayne and Sue Arnold (Teepee Ring Bison), and the son of current MBA members, Julia and Tobin Arnold (Outlaw Livestock), Conrad, Montana. This was his second win at a junior judging contest as he took 2nd place in 2017, during the Western Bison Association Summer Conference, while also placing first that year as member of a team that included: Hunter Brown, Gunner, and Grace Klinger.

During the NBA contest, Teagen was responsible for judging 4 bison classes: bull calves, heifer calves, yearling bulls, and yearling heifers. Judging livestock is no easy task, and the youth that participate must have a keen ability to analyze and measure livestock against an ideal standard. They must exhibit a professional demeanor, take notes on the fly, and be ready to make sound decisions. They must also back their decisions through verbal discussion during inquiry by the NBA. The yearling bull class was judged as a Market Class and Teagen admitted he was worried about the oral presentation, yet he explained with confidence when he said, "I tried to look through the hide and determine which carcass would yield the owner the most money based on depth, width, fat cover, and length of loin."

This young man owns his own cow, Lou. He participates in the Montana Junior High Rodeo and especially enjoys team roping on the heel end, along with other rodeo events. He plans on participating in more judging contests in the future.

Congratulations Teagen, and all the best to you in the future, from your Montana Bison Association friends.



MICHAEL 'MIKE' QUAKENBUSH MAY DIES AT AGE 81

Michael "Mike" Quakenbush May, founding member of the Montana Bison Association, died peacefully on March 18, 2019, on his Antlers Ranch outside of Meeteetse, WY

Mike was born on Sept. 16, 1937, in Billings to Ernest R. May, Jr. and Donna Burden May. Not long after birth, he returned home to the Antlers Ranch founded by his great-grandfather, a German immigrant who arrived in the United States at age 15. He joined older brother Ernest 'Pete' May III and, not long after, a younger brother, William F. May, completed the trio.

May's early years on the ranch were, perhaps unknowingly, spent in preparation for what would become his life-long career and passion. Prior to high school, he was educated at the one-room log schoolhouse just down the road from his house and spent much of his childhood outdoors among the mountains, meadows, rivers, and animals to which he would devote his life.

He was sent to the Hill School in Pottstown, Pa., then returned to Wyoming and graduated from Cody High School before enrolling at the University of Wyoming.

In 1959, he married Helen Stubbs of Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, England, and had three children, Michael Q. "Micky," Rebecca Lee and Richard Henry "Sam" May. That marriage ended in 1981.

In 1965, as had his father and his father's father, May took control of the Antlers Ranch. After three decades of cattle ranching, and much to the consternation of other residents of the valley, May initiated an exchange of cattle for bison.

He quickly discovered that forming a bond with his bison was the most effective way of managing the animals. He was often found driving through the fields, at times just watching his buffalo. Sooner or later, they would visit and encircle him; he always commented he never saw a threat in their eyes.

Mike married Lori Kalchik, in 1998, and the two enjoyed a relationship devoted to each other and their families. An adventurous team, the two navigated the country, visiting family and friends and often finding themselves spending part of their summer on Lake Huron off the coast of Michigan.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents, Ernest R. and Donna B. May, brothers Pete and Billy May, and son Tom Kalchik.

He is survived by wife Lori May of the Antlers Ranch, sister-in-law Carol May of the Antlers Ranch, son Micky May and wife Lisa of Dallas, Texas, daughter Beckie Tilden and husband Scott Wagner of Cody and Chandler, Ariz., son Sam May of the Antlers Ranch, son Scott Kalchik and wife Kathleen of Northville, Mich., niece Dawn Conyers of Brighton, Mich., and nephew Ernie May and wife Meg of the Antlers Ranch. He is the beloved grandfather of S.J., Michael, Amelia, Patrick, Matilynn, Samantha, Abigail, Matthew, Madison, Aundrea, Tom, Cole, Tyler, Samantha, Zach, and Meghan. Mike also leaves behind many friends he has touched throughout his life.

As Mike wished, no memorial is planned, and cremation has taken place. In lieu of flowers, please donate a book to a good cause or pick up a book yourself, take some time to read, and think of Mike.

LET'S NOT FOLLOW CHICKEN ACROSS THE ROAD - FROM THE NBA BLOG

BY DAVE CARTER

A typical comment made when first trying some type of exotic meat: "Tastes like chicken."

But most foods don't really taste like chicken. According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, there's something else that doesn't taste like chicken these days: chicken.

The Journal reported last week, "Chicken companies spent decades breeding birds to grow rapidly and develop large breast muscles. Now the industry is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to deal with the consequences ranging from squishy fillets known as 'spaghetti meat,' because they pull apart easily, to leathery ones known as 'woody breast'."

I don't generally recommend that bison ranchers learn from the poultry industry, but I think there's a major lesson for us in this story.

Commodity livestock industries have fixated for years on growing the heaviest animals possible in the shortest time from birth to harvest. No sector has mastered this goal better than the broiler chicken industry. Fifty years ago, the average broiler chicken took about nine weeks to grow to a market weight of 3.5 lbs. Continuous tinkering with genetics, feed and other factors have shaved that time by a fourth, while nearly doubling the weight of a market-ready chicken.

On top of that, the chicken has been continuously modified to meet changing consumer demand. Breast meat in high demand? Let's create chickens that would put Dolly Parton to shame. Customers discovered the great taste of chicken wings? Let's create flightless birds with bigger, meatier wings. Bison ranchers, too, are concerned about the growth rate of the slaughter animals in our herds. It's a natural component of economic sustainability. After all, every additional day an animal spends on grass or grain is a cost of production. But there's a strong difference in optimizing growth potential and pushing that growth potential beyond natural limits. At some point, Mother Nature is going to say: Enough.

I thought about that this week, as I looked over the latest monthly USDA wholesale bison price report. The average reported carcass weight on young bulls last month was 695 lbs. Two years ago, the average bull carcass weighed in at 600 lbs. That's a 14 percent increase in carcass weights over a two-year period. Unlike the chicken industry, bison producers haven't likely shortened the time required to reach that heavier carcass. But it's fair to ask if the meat coming off of a 695 lb. carcass is going to have the same eating quality as the meat from a lighter animal.

There's another factor to consider as well.

According to USDA, 19,959 young bison bulls were processed under federal inspection in 2018. Let's assume those carcasses averaged 695 lbs. If so, those 19,959 bulls supplied a total of 13.87 million lbs. of carcass weight for our customers.

If those carcasses had averaged 600 lbs., 3,160 additional young bulls would have been required to produce the same amount of carcass weight. In other words, our marketers could supply a stable market by purchasing 3,160 fewer heavy young bull carcasses from ranchers. Oh, and the meat would not likely be as high quality as that coming from the lighter animals.

Years ago, the prevailing voices in the bison business made a declaration that we should never turn our animals into a mass commodity. That was sage advice. Our customers have demonstrated that they are willing to pay a premium price for great tasting meat produced in harmony with nature, and with a concern for the integrity of the animal.

While the chicken industry spends millions of dollars to figure out how to once again engineer super-sized birds to create something that tastes like chicken, let's just use a little common sense and listen to Mother Nature...and our customers.

It's time to lighten up.



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