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BUFFALO ASSOCIATION

TERRITORY BUFFALO NEWS



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Photo: Blue Valley Ranch

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The vision of the
Dakota
Territory Buffalo
Association is to
perpetuate buffalo as
the great North
American
native animal



Dakota Territory Buffalo Association Newsletter **December, 2020**



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Do you like photography? Have some great bison, wildlife, or ranching related photos you would like to share? Send them to us, along with the photo credit and a caption or short story, and we'll put them in the newsletter. You'll be famous!



Photo: John and Jen Graves, JG Bison



Notes From the President - Liz Schroth, Ellsworth, NE

I hope you are all well, especially in a time of such turmoil. It has been a year to test our faith. The bison industry has softened, but my hope for you and your operation is to persevere. Together we will all come out on the other side. I am excited to get together in February for our annual winter conference and I am also excited to have joined forces with the NBA to do so. We understand that it is an uncertain time due to COVID so we are offering a virtual registration option for those of you who don't feel comfortable attending in person. For the rest, I look forward to seeing you there. May God bless you and your family during this Christmas season and the New Year. As always if you have any questions or concerns regarding DTBA or the winter conference I would love to hear from you: 605-949-1146 or email at liz_johnson01@hotmail.com.



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The mission of the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association is to promote buffalo and furnish a positive forum for creativity and camaraderie among a diverse membership.



Starting Our Bison Adventure

By John and Jen Graves, JG Bison, Sheridan, WY

When it comes to starting a bison operation from scratch, you need to be a little crazy, a little rich (or very rich), and have passion. Of those three things, we bring the passion, we do alright with crazy, and we fail miserably at being rich. But, we are moving forward on starting our own bison ranch. Here is how we got to where we are today.

At Folsom Stadium, watching a University of Colorado football game in the fall of 2006, we watched Ralphie, the live buffalo mascot, charge onto the field. Jen nudged John and said, "You should do that," not knowing how much that spontaneous suggestion could change everything. The next spring, John made the team and started taking care of his first buffalo.

In January 2008, the National Bison Association (NBA) asked the Ralphie Handlers to help in the stock yards during the Gold Trophy Show and Sale (GTSS). There, John discovered his interest in buffalo extended past his work with Ralphie. Before the end of the sale, John gave Dave Carter his resume, not knowing what would come of it. The following summer he was the first intern for the NBA and worked on the first edition of the Bison Breeders Handbook, among other things.

John continued with the Ralphie Program, training a new buffalo to run with the team and being hired as the Assistant Coach. Admitting defeat and realizing it might be more than a college hobby, Jen began to help John with caring for Ralphie. Between weekends at the ranch and helping John study for his Masters in Agriculture, her knowledge and passion for buffalo blossomed as well.

Over the next several years, John collected new buffalo experiences while working at the GTSS and working with Ralphie. He joined the Rocky Mountain Bison Association (RMBA) and met Scott Butcher, who began to teach him more about working bison during the annual bison roundup at Diamond Tail Ranch. Over time, John started to serve on a few NBA committees, began presenting on training Ralphie at the NBA Winter Conference, and was elected to the RMBA Board, becoming President in 2015.

Also in 2015, John was promoted to Director of the Ralphie Live Mascot Program. There was no turning back now. We embraced being fully "bison crazy" and made efforts to promote and educate people about bison everywhere possible. After her stellar attendance at RMBA events (attending with John) and always being two feet away from the board meeting, Jen was elected as RMBA's Board Secretary in 2017.

By 2019, John had a few buffalo under his care for CU and Jen had "her" first bison living at a friend's ranch. We were attending as many conferences as we could, talking to everyone about how extraordinary the animals are, and working hard to put on conferences to help share knowledge among the community and industry.

The year 2020 seemed like a great year for us to change everything, so in December 2019 we decided to start our own bison ranch. After almost 14 years with the greatest live mascot program in the country, John resigned from the Ralphie Program, creating the opportunity for us to move and buy land.

"Bison Adventure" Continued on page 5...



Photo: John and Jen Graves, JG Bison



DTBA Winter Updates - Tammi Cooley, Executive Director

Well, it is that time of year again: Time to reflex on the current year and also time to plan for a brand-new year that will soon be here.

First, I would like to thank the members who have already renewed their memberships for 2021 and I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to renew their membership, either online or by mail. We have included a membership form for your convenience in the newsletter.



The Dakota Territory Buffalo Association is here because of our members and for our members. Next, I would like you all to start thinking about the Winter Conference February 19th-20th as it will be here before we know it. This year will be a little (or maybe a lot) different due to the COVID situation. We are partnering with the National Bison Association and they will be bringing their Gold Trophy Show & Sale to town to join our Girlz Going Wild competition at the Fairgrounds in Rapid City. We will still be selling the animals by video at the hotel on Saturday night, but you do not have to travel so far to see them and take them home with you. We moved the conference to a little later in the month so Rapid City and the hotel will not be as crowded. We are also offering a virtual option for the conference, for those who would prefer to participate online. Please go to the NBA website www.bisoncentral.com, or call 303-392-2833 to register before January 20th, 2021. You can call the Best Western Ramkota directly at 605-343-8550 to reserve your room under the National Bison Association block. The conference is coming together nicely. We have some excellent

speakers lined up, and hopefully everyone can learn a thing or two.

This summer we had some unfortunate luck with the Young Guns competition. Kevin Leier, from the Host Ranch Heartland Bison Ranch, has carefully documented what happened and will share what we learned and answer your questions on Saturday morning at the conference. The Show & Sale committee has been working on a new competition format and

will discuss it at the DTBA Consignor meeting on the afternoon of Thursday, February 18th. Please take a moment to review the write up in this newsletter, and then bring your comments and suggestions to the meeting. We would like to hear from you, the consignors, on how we can remain the best performance-based competition and sale.

The Girlz Going Wild competition is still going strong. There will be some genuinely nice Girlz for you all to take home to your herds.

Last, but not least, Colton Jones, one of the members on our Board of Directors, has decided not to run for another term. We have one excellent candidate, but if you are interested in running or know someone who would like to compete for a seat on our Board of Directors, please let me or one of the Board members know.

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year. I look forward to seeing you all at the Winter Conference and feel free to contact me if you have any comments, questions or concerns. My phone number is 605-430-0532 and my email is info@dakotabuffalo.com.

"Bison Adventure" Continued from page 4... By March 2020, we had started our business plan, designed our logo and picked a slogan. While the pandemic gave us a slight pause, we listed and sold our house in Erie, Colorado in May and immediately moved to Sheridan, Wyoming – the area where we wanted to live.

We filed the necessary paperwork to form our business as an LLC and got the required business licenses. We designed and launched a website (www.jgbison.com) and started sharing our journey through blog posts and social media. We are in the process of trademarking our logo and slogan and have been selling some branded merchandise on the side.

We purchased land just outside of Sheridan in August and for us, these 175 acres make up our slice of heaven. The land has lots of character with numerous hills, draws, a few springs, a creek, abundant grasses, shrubs and, very important to Jen, trees. The wildlife is diverse and abundant. We estimate approximately 250 grazable acres, based on an aerial view.

While we are continuing to make progress towards adding bison to the land, including finalizing a fencing design, our primary focus has been making a place for us to live. We have picked a spot for the house, worked on an access road, brought in electricity, and drilled a well. We are getting closer to beginning construction every day. In the interim, we are spending time getting to know our neighbors and talking with them about our plans. Next summer, if things go according to plan, we will bring in the first few head of bison. We will start small with a handful of young heifers and a bull, hoping to have a starting herd of 20-30 animals. We will primarily operate as a cow-calf operation, eventually looking into providing quality breeding stock and local meat sales.

The process has been exciting, hard, encouraging, and frustrating all at the same time. We keep taking steps forward toward our dream of running our own bison ranch. We are happy to share our story if it helps others, because the community sure has helped us get to this point.





2021 COMBINED WINTER CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 19th-20th, 2021

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HOTEL INFO

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QUESTIONS?

Visit: www.BisonCentral/winter-conference

Email: jim@bisoncentral.com

Call: (303) 292-2833

Final Conference Agenda

Friday, February 19th

8:00 am - Registration Open

9:30 am - Conference Welcome & Legislative Update

10:00 am - Bison Marketing Success in 2020; Panel Discussion

11:15 am - Drs. Kristi Cammack & Jeff Martin, "The Center of Excellence for Bison Studies at SDSU"

Noon - Lunch

1:00 pm - Dr. Brad Johnson, "Basics of Diet Formulation in Bison Production"

3:00 pm - Bison Mentor Session; Panel Discussion

5:30 pm - Social, Dinner and Benefit Auction

Saturday, February 20th

8:00 am - Registration Open

8:00 am - GTSS Consignors Meeting

9:00 am - Kevin Leier, Heartland Bison Ranch, "Managing the Young Guns Through *Mycoplasma Bovis*"

10:30 am - Elizabeth Thistlewaite, Chris Roper and Kristopher Kelley, "Processing Challenges and Solutions"

11:30 am - Lunch

12:30 pm - Visit the Bison, Central States Fairgrounds

2:00 pm - Dusty Oedekoven, DVM, SD State Veterinarian

3:00 pm - DTBA General Membership Meeting

4:00 pm - NBA General Membership Meeting

5:00 pm - DTBA/NBA Awards Dinner

6:00 pm - NBA Gold Trophy and DTBA Girlz Going Wild Simulcast Bison Auction

REGISTRATION

In-person - \$150 (includes meals)

Virtual - \$50

Extra Dinner Tickets - \$60

Kids' Meal Pass - \$60

Exhibitor Booth - \$150

Please register online at:

www.BisonCentral.com/winter-conference

or by calling (303) 292-2833 by January 20th, 2021



New Center of Excellence for Bison Studies Paves Way to Advance Bison Research and Knowledge

By Dr. Kristi Cammack, South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD

In partnership with the National Bison Association (NBA) and the National Buffalo Foundation (NBF), South Dakota State University (SDSU) launched the Center of Excellence for Bison Studies earlier this fall. The Center will be housed at the SDSU West River Research & Extension facility in Rapid City, and is focused on advancing research and outreach activities important to the bison industry.

Initial plans for the Center began in May of 2017 when leaders from the NBA, the NBF, and Sinte Gleska University visited the SDSU campus to discuss research and knowledge gaps faced by the industry. The assembled group, including SDSU researchers and administrators, recognized the need for a coordinated effort to generate the resources necessary to tackle the challenges important to the bison industry. As a land grant institution, SDSU recognized this as an important stakeholder need, and stepped up to the plate to lead the development of a Center of Excellence. The 2018 U.S. Farm Bill authorizes the USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture to recognize Centers of Excellence in research, extension and education in the food and agricultural sciences.



Dr. Kristi Cammack

The Center will focus on research and outreach activities important to advancing the bison industry, including improving bison herd health, enhancing the economic viability of private and tribal bison producers, and understanding ecological and human health advantages associated with bison production and product consumption, respectively. This will involve an annual grants program that will provide funding – on a competitive basis – to applicants with innovative proposals that address research and outreach priorities. The Center will also serve as a resource to the industry – from producers to consumers – for bison knowledge and information.

Dr. Kristi Cammack will serve as director of the Center and coordinate daily operations under the direction of an 11-member board composed of SDSU officials, NBA and NBF representatives, bison ranchers and tribal representatives. SDSU has continued to bolster the Center with the addition of researcher Dr. Jeff Martin, a bison researcher with a lifetime of experience in the bison industry. Dr. Martin will help lead and coordinate bison research and outreach efforts at SDSU.

For more information on the Center of Excellence for Bison Studies, contact Dr. Cammack at: kristi.cammack@sdstate.edu or 605-394-2236.

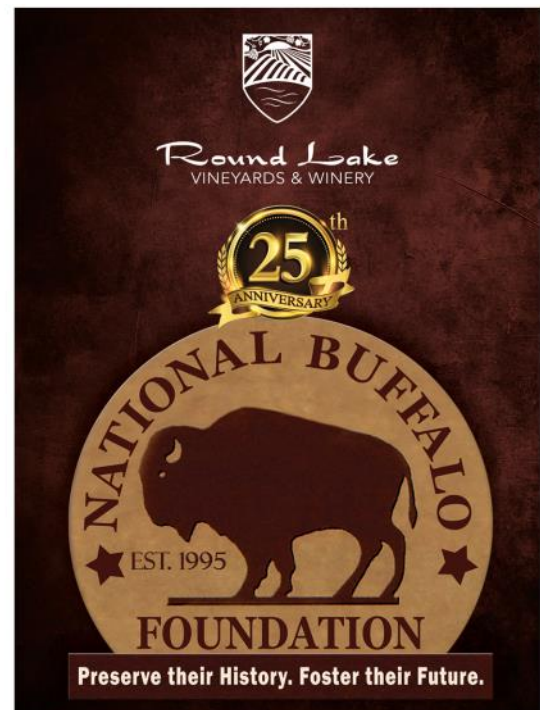


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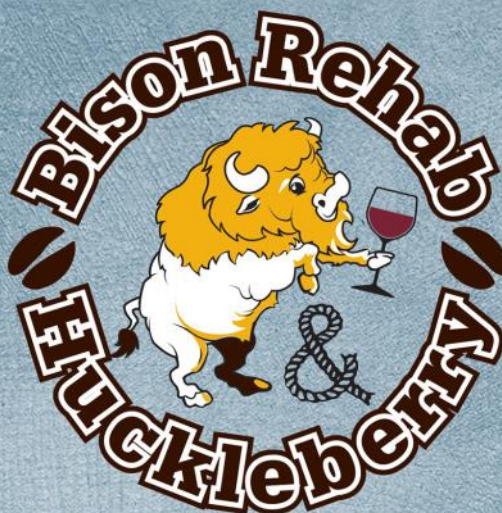
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Show & Sale Report - December, 2020

By Kevin Leier, Rugby, ND

Last month, the Show and Sale Committee (S&SC) put out a survey asking members about supporting the Young Guns and Girlz Going Wild performance classes. The results indicated that there will not be enough animals consigned for the host ranches to commit to another year of hosting at the current locations. After several phone calls and asking for more input, without much luck, the S&SC recommended to the DTBA Board of Directors that the current performance class format be discontinued and that a fresh, new sale approach be initiated.

It is no secret that the Young Guns and Girlz Going Wild competitions have set a new industry standard for performance tested breeding stock. Some of the very best breeding bulls and heifers in the nation have come through these programs and ranchers all over the United States have benefitted. As this current format comes to an end, however, the S&SC is looking towards the future with optimism to bring an industry leading performance tested sale format to the DTBA membership and to the bison industry at large.

There is a proposal for a new sale framework (see below) for how things might look moving forward. As with anything new, we are looking for input during the process. One thing is clear; performance data matters. This is a key part of the conversation the S&SC is having, and moving forward we are looking at ways to allow individual producers to showcase their own program's performance data coming off their individual ranches. Additionally, we also see how impactful video auction formats are becoming with more and more buyers getting comfortable with this electronic process. This is also another key point to look at as we formulate this new plan.

In considering these key points, please find below a current proposal on the sale structure. Keep in mind that this is a working document, and will need some refining. The biggest questions here is: **What do you, as a potential consignor or buyer, want to see in a new format?** That feedback will be critical and immensely helpful as we move forward to introduce a great new program in 2022. Check out what is currently being discussed and please reach out to the S&SC committee members, including Alex Heim 605-770-6190, Kevin Leier 701-208-0440, or Cody Kloeckl 605-641-7776, to our Executive Director Tammi Cooley at info@dakotabuffalo.com, or to anyone on the Board of Directors with your input. Thank you in advance.

Proposed Show & Sale Framework

NAME: Dakota Territory Buffalo Association Black Hills Gold Rush Performance Driven Breeding Stock Sale

FOCUS: Create the industry leading performance based breeding stock consignment sale in a modified sale format featuring consignments of breeding bulls live on site with female consignments being videoed right at the ranch. All animals to be sold via simulcast at a location TBA.

SALE STRUCTURE:

- Classes to be included
 - ◇ Bulls - Yearling bulls and 2-yr old bulls; Consignor max of 5 total bulls for USA Consignors, 2 total bulls for Canadian Consignors
 - ◇ Heifers - Yearling heifers and 2-yr old bred heifers; Minimum consignment of 5 per class with a maximum of 50 (with buying increments of 5 animals)
- Consignment fees / Commissions
 - ◇ Bulls - \$300 (golden ticket) per bull consigned + 5% commission (\$300 to DTBA for marketing/auction)
 - ◇ Heifers - 5% commission

CONSIGNOR REQUIREMENTS:

- Paid member of DTBA
- Bull consignments declared by June 1st with non-refundable deposits for bulls. Heifer entries approximately 45 days before the sale date.
- Consignors must provide a producer affidavit explaining their program and what their animals went through including a minimum of 2 weights (weaning/spring, summer/fall, winter/sale), feed ration and total days on feed/grass or both. Producer program affidavits must be submitted by January 20th (pending sale date); otherwise spots in the sale will be cancelled.
- Consignors are encouraged to market their animals with ideas for enticing buyers, such as comped testing, hauling, etc.
- Marketing and promotional material would be pushed out starting at the end of September and then again each month leading up to the sale.



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I AM BISON - New Exhibit at the National Bison Museum

By Megan Hennes, Visitor Services & Membership Coordinator, National Buffalo Museum

Thanksgiving weekend brought something new to the National Buffalo Museum in Jamestown, ND! A debut art installation by Virginia-based artist Patty Swygert opened at the museum on Friday, November 27th, and a virtual opening reception and artist talk was held on December 4th.

Swygert is a conceptual and visual sculptor and fiber artist. Her installation, *I AM BISON*, uses paint, ink, earth pigments, soil, dyes, thread and yarn on paper, fabric, and found objects, to offer glimpses of the iconic National Mammal, from prehistory through present day. The installation features nearly 30 two- and three-dimensional works created by Swygert specifically for the National Buffalo Museum's space.

"When Patty contacted us after she participated in our juried art show, *Bison in Art 2019*, to propose creating this immersive exhibit, we were thrilled. It is exciting to have an artist of this caliber creating work for the museum and bringing attention to the story of the bison's ongoing restoration," said Rachel Johnson, the museum's Curator of Collections.

Asked what inspired her about this project, Swygert said, "I love stories, especially those which feature an underdog and involve numbers. The story of the bison has both of those characteristics. From the first animals which crossed into North America from Asia, bison flourished until millions roamed the continent for hundreds of thousands of years before being reduced to fewer than 1,000 animals in just a few decades and then brought back from the brink of extinction."

Swygert's work has been exhibited locally, nationally, and internationally. The scale of her work can range in size from micro sculptures less than 2 inches to room-sized installations. She works in various media including concrete, led lights, paper, fabric, fiber, metal, wood, stone, glass, and repurposed and found objects. Often experiential and interactive, tactile and touchable, some of Swygert's pieces capture light, texture, and color while others address more controversial social issues, global crises, and the fate of humans and animals as they navigate a changing world.

I AM BISON will be on view at the National Buffalo Museum from November 27, 2020 to September 11, 2021. More information and a recording of the December 4th reception and artist talk can be found at BuffaloMuseum.com/exhibits.



Gallery views of *I AM BISON* at the National Buffalo Museum





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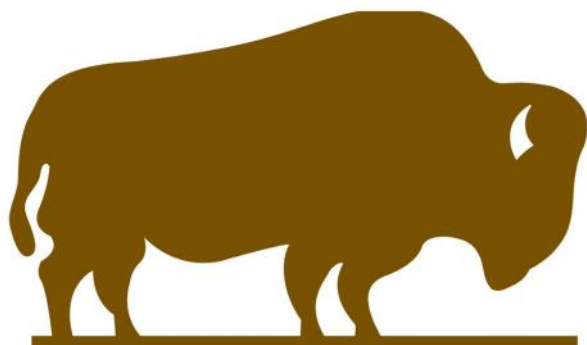


Scholarship Rifle Raffle for 2021 Graduates

The rifle raffle has been an extremely successful program over the past several years, raising a lot of scholarship money for the next generation of bison ranchers and conservationists. The sponsors love it, the ticket buyers love supporting the program, and the scholarship recipients obviously love it too.

Ever since the program started, the scholarship committee has tried to get something kind of special without breaking the bank. This year we decided to go with OLD GLORY, a custom American Flag cerakoted .223 AR-15 rifle, once again built by Cody Klockel. An awesome rifle, we felt it was fitting in 2020 to show our support for our Country, and what's more patriotic than a flag-wrapped AR? Let's keep America great!

Thanks to everyone who supported the scholarship program. This year's sponsors are same as last year, including Scott Peterson, Sandy Limpert, Wayne Buchholz, Cody Klockel and David Lauth. Once again, we are only selling 300 tickets and they will go fast! Tickets are, once again, \$20 each, and you can purchase them at the Winter Conference, assuming any are left, or you can purchase them now by contacting Tammi Cooley at 605-430-0532 or info@dakotabuffalo.com. Don't wait!



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Dakota Territory Buffalo Association
P.O. Box 1315
Rapid City, SD 57709

SD FFA Provides Ag Zone at the Black Hills Stock Show

For the first time, the South Dakota FFA will be hosting interactive and educational exhibits focused on agriculture education during the Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo. In conjunction with Rodeo Rapid City, we will be hosting an *Ag Adventure Zone* for Stock Show attendees. The *Ag Adventure Zone*, like the FFA Ag Adventure Center at the South Dakota State Fair, has a mission to “Showcase modern agricultural practices, communication commitment to natural resources and demonstrate wholesome, safe food production.” FFA’s booth will include exhibits showcasing the diversity of agriculture in our state and will provide Stock Show attendees, young and old, with a chance to learn more about agriculture in South Dakota, and value how it works. Each day we will also host an hour session on the Rodeo Zone stage showcasing various sectors of South Dakota agriculture and providing interactive demonstrations. These will range from natural resources education, modern technology in agriculture, livestock production and harvesting and FFA promotion and activities. We are grateful to be partnering with SD ag industries and organizations who support the SD FFA and Agriculture Education, to provide these unique, educational and exciting activities to those attending this year’s Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo. For more information on the *Ag Adventure Zone*, please contact: Dani Herring, SD FFA Executive Secretary, dani.herring@sdstate.edu, 605-695-8525 OR Gerri Eide, SD FFA Foundation Director, gerri@sdffaoundation.org.

