

BISON

Bison bison (Bovinae)

Fast facts:

Number of Growers: less than 25

Amount of bison produced in Washington State: 500-1000

Bison supply 0.01% of the nations red meet

Description

Of crop:

Bison is a taxonomic group containing six species of large even-toed ungulates within the subfamily Bovinae. Only two of these species still exist: the American bison and the European bison, or wisent, each with two subspecies.

A bison has a shaggy, dark brown winter coat, and a lighter weight, lighter brown summer coat. Bison can reach up to 6.6 ft tall, 10 ft long, and weigh 900 to 2,200 pounds. The biggest specimens on record have weighed as much as 2,500 pounds. The heads and forequarters are massive, and both sexes have short, curved horns, which they use in fighting for status within the herd and for defense.

Bison are herbivores, grazing on the grasses and sedges of the North American prairies. They eat in the morning and evening, and rest during the day. Bison mate in August and September; gestation is 285 days. A single reddish-brown calf is born the following spring, and it nurses for a year. Bison are mature at three years of age, and have a life expectancy of approximately 15 years in the wild and up to 25 years in captivity.

Juveniles are lighter in color than mature bison for the first three months of life. One very rare condition is the white buffalo, where the calf turns entirely white. White bison are considered sacred by many Native Americans.

Bison are polygamous. Dominant bulls maintain a small harem of females for mating. Individual bulls "tend" females until allowed to mate, by following them around and chasing away rival males

A bison wallow is a shallow depression in the soil, which was used either wet or dry. Bison roll in these depressions, covering themselves with dust or mud. Past explanations and current hypotheses suggested for wallowing behavior include grooming behavior associated with shedding, male-male interaction (typically rutting behavior), social behavior for group cohesion, play behavior, relief from skin irritation due to biting insects, reduction of ectoparasite (tick and lice) load, and thermoregulation.

The only continuously wild bison herd in the United States resides within Yellowstone National Park. Numbering between 3,000 and 3,500, this herd is descended from a remnant population of 23 individual mountain bison that survived the mass slaughter of the 1800s by hiding out in the Pelican Valley of Yellowstone Park. In 1902, a captive herd of 21 Plains bison were introduced to the Lamar Valley and managed as

livestock until the 1960s, when a policy of natural regulation was adopted by the park.

Swauk Prairie Bison in Kittitas valley is one of the handfuls of bison producers in Washington State. Swauk Prairie like many other producers in Washington are just a small cow calf operation producing locally sold meat.

Key pests:

Common pasture flies are the only external pests of any note in bison production.

Key pesticides:

No pesticides are used to control the common pasture fly do to the tendency of Bison to wallow naturally controlling the flies

Critical pest

Control issues: There are no critical pest control issues at this time

Expert contacts: Jim Hanson

509-929-4182

509-925-3412

www.spbison.

Location

Of Production: Kittitas, Benton, Clallam, Clark, Douglas, Garfield, Grays Harbor, King, Kitsap, Lincoln, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Whatcom



Buffalo

Buffalo Production in Washington State

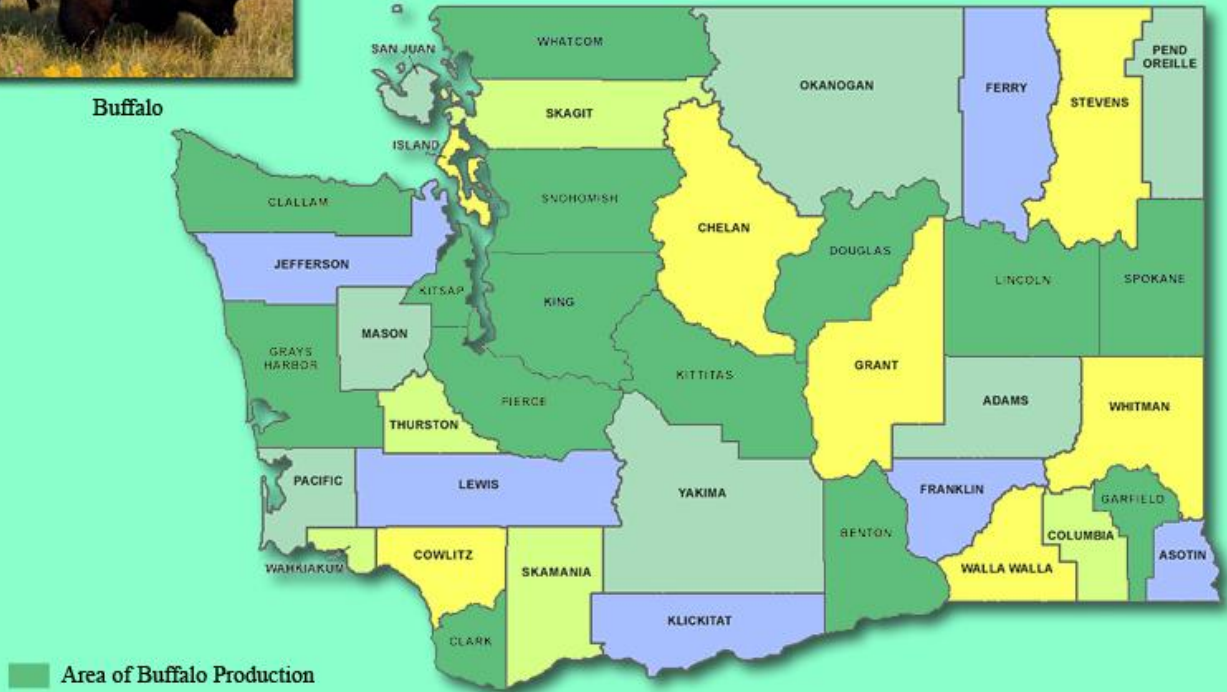


Photo of bison in Kittitas County

<http://www.spbison.com:80/>