

National Animal Health Monitoring System to Study Ranched Bison in 2014

The first national study of the U.S. ranched-bison industry is scheduled to begin in late summer 2014. The study is being conducted by the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS), with assistance from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). With this study, NAHMS, a program within the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), seeks to increase knowledge and understanding about the characteristics, health and management practices, and challenges of bison operations in the United States.

Study focus

The Bison 2014 study is being conducted as a result of discussions between APHIS and representatives of the U.S. bison industry. NAHMS obtained input from bison producers and other industry stakeholders to define the most critical information needs of the industry; this input was used to develop the Bison 2014 study objectives:

- Provide a baseline description of the U.S. ranched-bison industry, including basic characteristics of operations, such as inventory, size, and type.
- Describe current U.S. bison industry production practices and challenges, including identification, confinement and handling, animal care, and disease testing.
- Describe health management and biosecurity practices important for the productivity and health of ranched bison.
- Describe producer-reported occurrence of select health problems and evaluate potentially associated risk factors.

"The bison business is a rapidly growing part of the livestock sector. Our continued growth depends in large part on making sure that producers have the knowledge and resources needed to keep their herds healthy. The partnership with NAHMS is a tremendous asset for our industry. The National Bison Association will work to assure full participation by producers throughout our industry."

—Dave Carter
Executive Director
National Bison Association

How you can help

By participating in Bison 2014, you will help the industry and your own operation by contributing to the development of reliable and accurate information about important issues facing U.S. bison operations. This information will have many uses, including the following:

- Assisting university researchers, extension agents, producer groups, and others in identifying and focusing educational and research efforts on vital issues related to U.S. bison operations.
- Assisting animal health officials, policy-makers, and industry members in making informed decisions to help protect U.S. agriculture and animal health.



Photograph courtesy of Matthew S. Patyk

What your participation involves

Participation in the Bison 2014 study is voluntary and confidential. All U.S. operations with ranched bison are invited to participate. The study will be conducted as described below:

- In late summer 2014, NASS will send you a questionnaire and materials describing the study, along with a postage-paid return envelope.
- At your convenience, please complete the questionnaire and return it to NAHMS within two weeks.

How you and the industry will benefit

Individual producers and the U.S. bison industry will benefit from a variety of in-depth reports and information sheets that will describe the current management, health, and productivity of the industry. These publications will enable producers to compare their operations—including management decisions and practices—with other bison operations. Current and scientifically valid estimates of general management and health-related topics will be presented.

A scientific approach

APHIS established NAHMS to collect and report accurate and useful information on animal health and management in the United States. Since 1990, NAHMS has provided national estimates on disease prevalence and other factors related to the health of U.S. beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, equine, poultry, aquaculture, sheep, and goat populations. The science-based results produced by NAHMS have proved to be of considerable value to the U.S. livestock, poultry, and aquaculture industries, as well as to other animal-health stakeholders.

NAHMS studies are

- National in scope,
- Science based,
- Statistically valid,
- Collaborative in nature,
- Voluntary, and
- Confidential.



Photograph courtesy of Matthew S. Patyk

“Bison are built to survive—and to thrive—in this part of the world. But they aren’t immune to some of the epidemiological challenges such as Mycoplasma bovis and malignant catarrhal fever. They aren’t cattle, and don’t respond like other livestock species to testing for pathogens. The bison immune system doesn’t respond in the same way as other livestock or wildlife species. The NAHMS Bison 2014 study can provide us with valuable species-specific resources.”

—Dave Hunter, DVM
Veterinarian, Turner Enterprises, Inc.
Chair, National Bison Association Science and Research Committee

“Because of the size of our industry, we often lack access to resources available to producers of the major livestock species. I will be encouraging every producer in our business to participate in the NAHMS bison study so that we can develop tools and resources that will allow us to better manage our herds.”

—Peter Cook
President, National Bison Association
Owner, Cooks Bison Ranch, Wolcottville, IN

Confidentiality

The Bison 2014 study will be conducted by NAHMS under its designation as a statistical unit under the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA). By law, all information collected during the Bison 2014 study will be used for statistical purposes only and will be treated as confidential in accordance with CIPSEA guidelines. Bison 2014 results will be presented only in an aggregate manner.

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