

EXOTICS

Timeline of Events

1960s

- Number of exotic hoofstock in TX in 1966: 37,500¹

1970s

- Number of exotic hoofstock in TX in 1974: 57,300¹
- Llamas become popular as novelty. Products: meat, wool, pack and guard animal
- Farmed bison estimated at 30,000, with four bison ranchers producing the bulk of commercial meat (1972)²

1980s

- Number of exotic hoofstock in TX in 1988: 164,300¹
- Ostrich ranching began again in early 1980s (were raised in AZ & CA from about 1880 to late 1930s, mainly for feathers, but industry died out when demand did)³
- Prices for ostriches soared, in part as a result of South Africa stopping exports and the US temporarily banning imports due to disease concerns (1988)^a.

1990s

General

- As of 1993, bans or severe restrictions on owning potentially harmful exotic species exist in CA, WY, AZ; regulations tightened or proposed in LA, NH, WI, SC, MO, OH, IN, CO.⁴
- The Livestock Conservation Institute in 1997 reaffirmed 3 resolutions concerning alternative livestock due to “the increasing growth of the captive wildlife and alternative livestock industries”. The resolutions encourage APHIS to provide leadership on several issues regarding legal authority, interstate movement, and disease transmission.⁵
- Number of exotic hoofstock in TX in 1996: 198,060⁶
- Other principal states with exotic big game: CA, FL, HI, MA, MO, NE, NH, NM, NY, NC, PA, TN, VA
- Big game products: meat - mainly to gourmet establishments; by-products (antlers, horns, hides) - mainly to Asian countries
- Other income from big game: fee hunting - examples of number of entries in Farm Journal’s fee hunting directory: 8 in CO; 16 in KS; 25 in NE; 48 in SD (October 1997)⁷

^a A potentially disease-carrying tick was found on an imported ostrich. Other diseases of ostriches or ostrich products that pose a potential animal health threat are: Newcastle disease; avian influenza, and borna disease.^{3,20}

Deer and Elk

- North American Elk Breeders Association founded in 1990 and had 300 members; up to 1,400 members with 90,000 member-owned elk in 1997⁸
- Estimated 126,000 farmed deer in 1996, up from 44,000 in 1992⁹
- The US supplies only 25-30% of venison consumption (1997)⁹
- States that do not allow deer and/or elk farming due to disease concerns, primarily tuberculosis: AL, AZ, CA, MD, MA, OR, VA, WA, WV, WY (1997)¹⁰

Ostrich and emu

- New ratiite industry featured in national news services, national newspapers and magazines, and major TV networks (early 1990's)
- Booming emu market in TX in early 1990s, with breeding pairs selling for as much as \$40,000. Emu products: meat and oil¹¹
- One million emu nationwide in 1997¹²
- Emu market collapses, with breeding pairs selling for \$400, and owners turning their animals loose or killing them (1997)
- Imports of ostrich chicks and eggs re-opened in 1991
- American Ostrich Association (national level) founded in 1992
- 350,000-500,000 ostriches in 1995, up from about 15,000 in 1992. Major states are TX, CA, AZ, and OK. Ostrich products: meat, hides, feathers^{3,13}
- Prices of ostrich breeding pairs dropped from \$45,000 to \$5,000 in five years¹⁴
- 1997: Ostrich sales are up during the past two years; 2,500 birds slaughtered in the US monthly, compared with 100 a month two years ago, with close to 70% of that meat going to foreign markets¹⁵
- 1994: FSIS begins voluntary, fee-for-service inspection of ostrich plants and expands this to include all ratites in 1995¹⁶
- 1996: NPIP allowed ostriches to be regarded under its regulations as poultry, and have their own subsection under the program¹⁷

Bison

- About 250,000 bison in 1997, up from 116,000 in 1992^{2,18}
- More than 100 bison-producers in CO¹⁴
- Denver Buffalo Co (founded in January 1990) sold 2 million pounds of bison in 1997, double that of 1996¹⁴
- American bison industry growing by 30% a year¹⁵
- Demand for bison meat is greater than supply²

Llama

- 118,000 llama in 1997, up from 7,000 in 1984¹⁹
- Prices collapsed in early 1990's due to oversupply

Trends

- “Bison is here to stay as a viable niche market ... but it will never be a direct threat

- to beef.” (executive VP of the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association)¹⁴
- Continued interest of consumers in healthier alternatives to ‘usual’ red meat

Uncertainties For The Future

- Continued expansion of captive wildlife
For: favorable characteristics of meat (healthier than most others, palatable)
Against/barriers: public reluctance to try unfamiliar meat; urban development; price of meat; inconsistent health and meat handling regulations (regulations re: handling and sale of exotic game meat vary from state to state)
- Regulations re: captive wildlife. The market for captive bred animals has largely been overlooked by regulators because the focus of much animal trade regulation and enforcement has been on protecting animals in the wild.

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Chart from Carol

