

MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By: ©Bob Jackson, Tall Grass Bison
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- Stress has no boundaries. It also has no regard for intelligence and it doesn't care whether it zeroes in on humans or animals. If we acknowledge Buffalo having social order, then we also have to acknowledge what stress does to them when we strip all semblance of family life from them.
- Men, being the perennial providers, thought they could trade in their rifles for lariats when all the game was gone. The problem was they had no, and never will, inherent understanding of motherhood.
- Women, on the other hand, could have easily filled this void and directed men on how to care-take these animals. But can we blame them for not wanting to raise two families at the same time?
- In wild herds, and the few private herds with social order, one notices dependent offspring roaming farther away from mothers. They are interacting more with older siblings - "idols" and "heroes". Only in our privatized broken families does one see offspring clinging to their mothers all the time.
- Bison, with their sophisticated social structure, had to learn how to deal with stress. Their solutions show a behavior no different than I see in long-time human cultures with large populations. The orient, with its emphasis on order, peacefulness, and tranquility comes to mind as an appropriate parallel to Bison's supposedly lethargic nature.
- Men know long-term stress occurs when Bison are moved to new locations, but only women can answer the whys and wherefores to minimize this. Women can tell us why strange herds finally come together as one when calves are born. They can also tell us why cows lead their families apart from others. Also, only women could tell us what it would be like if someone took their baby away. They could tell us what it would do to them mentally, how it would affect their health, and ultimately, their will to live.
- Somehow we have removed ourselves so far from the meaning of our food that we promote our Bison attributes in analytical terms—the same as those of steel and glass—grams of protein and fat.

- Understanding Bison order would allow solutions to situations I see repeating themselves in large and small producers unstructured "herds"—mob and mass behavior in large herds and huddling and cowering in the small herds. Sale barns are good places to see the latter behavior. Big bunches of juvenile delinquent bulls chasing pre-estrus cows or killing singular mature bulls are examples of the first.
- I see both size producers approaching the problems in symptomatic solution order—break 'em and their range up for total control and then appease them with goodies (giving baby its bottle when it cries). Both methods cost lots of money and are perpetual in duration. The troubling part is present day managers and producers feel comfortable with these solutions.
- Family support groups are not going to form overnight. It will get better every year, but generally I see a minimum of 3-4 generations being needed for effective interaction.
- I liken today's Bison cow-calf practices to those occurring during slave trade days. Families were auctioned off and sold individually, price being based on physical attributes only. These assembled groups were then taken to the plantation and given quarters - segregated with problems for the slaves and extra expense to the owner. Of course, it did bust down any organization the owner feared might lead to rebellion.
- Range management specialists, by definition, are fencing themselves out of then- title. Maybe it should be changed to pasture management specialist.
- Corral construction success is simply giving Bison choices. "Slow and easy" reflects the decision to Bison for having some control over their lives, thus no tunnel vision or panic leading to injuries.
- If cattle management is inherently flawed, then the case can be made for removing the cowboy hat when decision-making is in order. It could be put back on for all those other times when the pure and rugged attributes cowboys are known for need to be conveyed.
- Time is short for such a majestic animal as the Bison is. To respect an animal we care-take becomes an urgent drive to learn as much as we can about that animal. That knowledge allows understanding, which in turn gives us the conscience needed to make decisions relative to the death of that animal. Thus life is assured.