



August 2016

# The Buffalo Rancher

Official Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association

## Important Dates:

PLAN TO ATTEND!

2016

September 23

RMBA Fall Tour

Plains Conservation  
Center & Ralphie Handlers  
Team Practice

(see pg. 10 -11 for all the  
information and registration form)

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Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association  
303 S. Broadway, Ste B522  
Denver, CO 80209

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Newsletter Chair: Patty Smith  
Proof Reading: Jill Crotty

Editor and Advertising:  
Laurie Dineen — 303/857-9306  
Laurie@greatrangebison.com

## 2016 RMBA 20th Anniversary Spring Conference Great Success!

RMBA's Spring Conference was a great way to celebrate the association's 20th birthday!

The conference had something for everyone - those whose buffalo are still a dream, those just starting and others who have been in the business for many years!

Approximately 50 people, including several first timers, gathered to learn from the speakers presentations; conduct the business of the association; elect the officers and board; share the meals that featured tasty bison dishes; have fun bidding on and buying the various items on the fun auction; and socializing and networking with their



fellow bison producers and enthusiasts.

We have included a brief run down within this newsletter of what all happened during our conference and encourage our members to continue their support of this great association.

## Spring Conference Speaker Line-up Provided Great Information

By: Nicole Jeffries

The speakers at the Rocky Mountain Bison Association Spring Conference were exceptional.



Roland Kroos addressed the Holistic Management topic. He stated that Bison are nature's natural garden-

ers. Grazing is good for the plants and is a healthy method of pasture management. The Bison do not trample the vegetation; however it is essential to allow the plants to recover by giving

enough time, usually at least 90 days or more, and that over grazing or allowing Bison too much time in one pasture should not be permitted.

The pasture area and the time allowed for grazing are key factors in determining the animal impact to protect the root system and maximize the grass production.

Bugs and insect control can be utilized with introducing or attracting fowl, harrowing, or disking the ground.

A good management team that addresses all of the issues and goals of a Bison ranch starts with good communication and planning.

By investing time and effort to cre-

*Continued on page 4*



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RMBA Official Web Site:

**buffaloranchers.com**

303/243-0900

All RMBA meeting minutes  
and financials are available from  
Secretary-Treasurer Tami Nott

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The buffalo industry has focused the past few years on increasing the number of active buffalo ranchers, and rightly so. We need all of these newly discovered buffalo ranchers to help increase the supply of buffalo products to meet the ever growing consumer demand. I think it is now time to shift our focus to educating our new buffalo ranching friends.

Potentially our focus could have first been on educating new buffalo ranchers instead of attracting them to the industry, but we need people to educate before we can focus on educating them. We have a wealth of knowledge from ranchers who have learned from trial and error year after year after year. We can harness their knowledge and pass it along to the industry to ensure our ranching friends raise buffalo humanely, efficiently, safely, and with a strong passion for the animal.

Over the years we have had more and more buffalo ranchers come into the industry from other ranching or farming endeavors. We now have ranchers joining our ranks that have never been exposed to agriculture, but are eager to learn.

As an industry we must provide these new ranchers the tools they need to succeed. We need to provide high quality conferences where valid and worthwhile topics are discussed. Of course basic topics are important, such as herd health, grazing management, handling, and nutrition, but sometimes these presentations are not geared toward that new rancher who is just starting out.

Every industry has its own dialect and jargon. With no experience in agriculture at all, some of these presentations might go right over people's head leading to confusion, frustration, or anger. Conference committees across the country working for different state and regional buffalo association and even the National Bison Association do a fantastic job doing all they can to cater to these new ranchers, as well as seasoned ranchers.

The quality of conferences the past three years has dramatically gone up. We

need to first educate our newest of new members to the family of buffalo ranching. We need to ensure that they are set up to succeed with all the knowledge they need. We also need to continue to educate lifelong buffalo ranchers and everyone in between.

RMBA member and longtime Buffalero at the Gold Trophy Show and Sale Tom Chaffin has always said, going to the educational conferences across the country are great and you will learn a lot, you will learn even more during the social hours talking to other experts and making friends who will help you when you get back to your ranch.

I am paraphrasing Tom, but he is 100% correct. If you have experience with something related to buffalo, pass that knowledge along to others who do not know that yet. If you have any suggestions for topics for future conferences, reach out to your association's elected officials, they are there to serve you and meet your needs.

I also want to wish Tom a very speedy recovery. He had an unfortunate incident with an angry cow during calving season this year, but I am glad to say that he is already back to work and is on the mend.

The Rocky Mountain Region has been fortunate with some great spring moisture that has even carried on into the early summer keeping everything green and growing. Luckily we have not seen severe storms like we have had in the past couple spring and summers.

I want to wish everyone best of luck finishing their summer time operations and stay safe during your fall round ups.



*John Graves*



## Spring Conference, *cont. from pg. 1*

ate healthy animals by providing plenty of forage, with a balanced nutrition and mineral program, you will see excellent animal husbandry.

We heard from Jennifer Barfield from the CSU Buffalo Herd's Genetic Washing Program of the Brucella Virus. She explained that they utilize the Yellowstone Bison Herd and developed reproductive techniques to wash or eliminate the virus to produce a healthy embryo. She stated that Trypsin is the key to remove the pathogen and dilute out fluid.



After the cleanse of the embryo; it is placed into the uterus of a female in the right stage of her reproductive cycle. She explained the specific handling and storage of the embryos.

She invited the RMBA members to discuss and share their herd experiences and knowledge with her.



Eric Erlich, the Nationwide Insurance Representative spoke about their partnership in the Bison business. Bison has been removed from the exotic animal category and is now covered under the liability umbrella. It was emphasized to ask (any agent) to "show where Bison are covered on insurance coverage."

Erlich also reviewed Agribusiness for different types of activities that pertain to Bison ranches and discussed examples of various coverages. Each Bison operation is different and a Risk Management Assessment of the ranch, facility, and animals will determine what coverages are best for each individual Bison ranch.

Each of the speakers were very passionate and informative about their areas of expertise. They did a great job of explaining their topics and spent time after their presentations to answer questions and visit with the RMBA members.

### **RMBA Fall Tour**

**Friday, September 23**

Make plans for this unique opportunity to visit the Plains Conservation Center, Bijou Creek and attend the Ralphie Handlers Practice session!  
**see page 10 for more information!**

## **A GREAT BIG THANK YOU to our 20TH ANNIVERSARY Conference Sponsors!**

Thank you to all of our sponsors - you allowed us not only to keep our registration for the conference affordable but provided to those attending delicious and healthy bison and beverages.

Friday's Social Hour appetizers were sponsored by **Erich Erlich, Nationwide Insurance** and the sausage was donated by **Continental Sausage**.

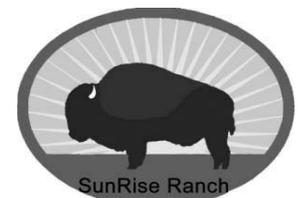
Friday's dinner of delicious bison prime rib was donated by **Rocky Mountain Natural Meats**, Bob and Laurie Dineen.

On Saturday, the morning coffee break was sponsored by **Durham Ranch**, John Flochinni.

The yummy buffalo burger for the lunch was donated by **SunRise Ranch**, Kyle and Kristin Stodola.

The afternoon break was sponsored by the **National Buffalo Foundation and Mosquito Park Enterprises**, Rod Sather.

Please take time thank all our sponsors when you meet up with them next, and by email, by snail mail, and by patronizing their businesses, by liking them on Facebook and any other way you can think of!



# 20th Anniversary Fun Auction and Bison Bingo Resounding Success!

By: Patty Smith

Between the bison bingo and fun auction, we raised over \$4600 for the association. This will allow us to do projects such as sponsoring meat for the FFA state convention, the state fair booth, sponsoring a scholarship for the NBA Junior Judging and other projects that will come our way.

The last person standing in Bison Bingo was Jen Graves and she chose a lovely bison necklace from the items in the fun auction.

Thanks to those who donated items for the auction and those who purchased! The buyers were spread out among most all of the attendees so everyone was in the buying mood!



Dan Martin from Lay Valley Bison Ranch was the higher volume buyer (which certainly surprised his



business associate who is writing this!) and Rod Sather from Mosquito Park was close behind him.

There were a wide range of items donated which always makes it fun and exciting. Our auctioneer, Jud Seaman, is very good at getting just "one more bid" from us - we appreciate what he does to make it such a success!



We appreciate and THANK all that volunteered to help out and to all those who attended our conference to make our 20th Anniversary a great success. Greg Nott took great photos (which have been used throughout this newsletter) and we hope you enjoy some of the shots he took throughout the conference.





**Hope to see you all next year!**

## Bison becomes First National Mammal of United States

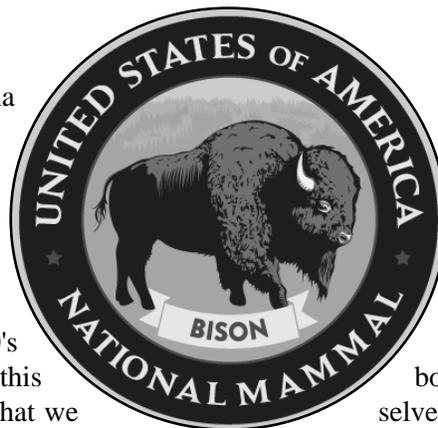
By: Kyle Stodola  
Sunrise Bison Ranch

On May 9th, 2016, President Obama signed legislation honoring the Bison as our great country's first national mammal. This majestic animal joins the ranks of the Bald Eagle as an official symbol of our country and has one of the greatest conservation success stories.

From their near extinction in the 1800's to now, a national icon, it is great to see this majestic animal getting the recognition that we ranchers see every day in raising this animal.

Today, the North American Bison can be seen in every U.S. state.

According to the 2012 U.S. Department of Agriculture



Census, an estimated 20,000 Bison live on public lands in North America and an additional 162,110 live on private farms and ranches.

Our country has come a long way from leading the slaughter of the Bison in mass genocide to realizing their greatness, and honoring them as an iconic symbol. We ranchers should be patting ourselves on the back for caring for and nurturing

the species back to existence. Many of us depend on

our bison to make a living, but we are also the stewards of them and the land they roam on and love them for their greatness.

# NBA'S 2016 Summer Conference

By Deb Thieman

Over 200 bison enthusiasts recently attended the NBA's 2016 Summer Conference at the Rockwood's Banquet Center in Elk River, Minnesota. The Minnesota Buffalo Association and the Snake River Farm, owned and operated by Tom Barthel and Gail Wilkinson, hosted the June 20-22 event. The three day conference was educational, well organized, packed with fun, and thoroughly enjoyed by the attendees.



The opening session on Monday began with a hearty welcome from the Minnesota Bison Association and the NBA. The luncheon featured walleye fish, which happens to be a popular Minnesota entree.



RMBA members enjoying themselves in the shade of the trees.

Topics presented during Monday afternoon were "Sustainable Farming" presented by John Mesko, "Objective Driven Grazing" by Steve Karel and Tony Hewitt, and "Project Bison" discussed by Jeff Martin.

The Bison vs Beef Carcass Breakdown and Use captivated the audience as they were butchered by Andre Abraham (North Star Bison) and his assistant. The bison and beef burger were later cooked and served during the conference. A delicious steak dinner was followed by a local comedy routine depicting Minnesota's favorite "Ole and Lena" characters.

Tuesday morning presentations featured Gabe Brown describing "How to Regenerate Our Resources" and the NRCS Conservation Programs. Next, the tour buses arrived and everyone boarded looking forward to the ranch



tour at Snake River Farm.

Tom and Gail provided the group an afternoon filled with fun activities. Tom took groups out to view their bison herd

via horse or tractor drawn wagons.

A museum in the barn, a log cutting and blacksmith demonstration, a replicated schoolhouse, and a s'more bon fire were activities enjoyed throughout the afternoon. Topping the day off was a steak dinner back at the banquet facility and fun auction.



The Summer Conference wrapped up Wednesday morning following an excellent "Mycoplasma Bovis" presentation given by Randy Shirbroun, DVM, Newport Labs and the general business meeting.

All in all the NBA's Summer Conference was a positive and enjoyable experience.

Mark your calendars now to attend the 2017 NBA Summer Conference which will partner with our International Conference. It will be held over July 4th at Big Sky, Montana. Lots of great activities are already being planned for this event.



# Livestock Stocking Rate and Nutrition

*Excerpt from John Graves' Masters Paper from Colorado State University, "Is there a Bison Advantage? Comparing the Costs and Resources Associated with the Raising of Bison and Cattle"*

Various stocking rates for bison have been suggested by state extension offices and federal agencies across the U.S. Stocking rate details how many animals can be supported on a piece of land for a given amount of time. To determine stocking rate, one must know the carrying capacity of land for grazing animals. This is expressed in terms of Animal Unit Months (AUM) or the amount of forage a 1,000-pound beef cow with a calf will consume in one month. It has been standardized that the 1,000-pound beef cow with a calf will consume 800 pounds of dry matter over the course of one month. To be able to compare different species and how much they consume in a month, the unit of Animal Unit Equivalent (AUE) was created. Different species of grazing animals have their own AUE. The 1,000-pound beef cow with a calf has an AUE of 1.0. A mature elk has an AUE of 0.6. The elk will consume 60% of the forage that the 1,000-pound beef cow with calf will consume. Antelope has an AUE of 0.2; they will consume 20% of the forage that the beef cow will consume. A mature beef bull has an AUE of 1.5; they will consume 150% of the forage that the beef cow will consume (Pratt, 2001). These examples of the AUE of elk and antelope are well established and researched by extension offices across the country. The values do not change from extension office to extension office. Knowing the actual nutritional needs of the animals is important to being able to know how much that animal will consume.

Stocking rates vary across the nation,

and from year to year. Areas that receive more precipitation have higher stocking rates than dryer areas because more forage is grown. More available forage for grazing means more animals can be raised on the land, or a higher stocking rate can be utilized. Eastern areas of the U.S. have a higher stocking rate than the western U.S.

The stocking rate that is utilized by each ranch is very dependent on the location of the ranch in the U.S., and is also determined by management practices. Some ranchers overgraze a pasture and then supplement their animals with hay to meet the animal's nutritional needs. Some ranchers under-graze their pastures to ensure there is enough feed available for their animals and also to help protect the pasture's production levels the following year. Calculating the correct stocking rate for the land each year is critical to ensure animals are not overgrazing the land and hurting its production output in future years, and also to ensure that the pastures are not being under-grazed, wasting extra feed that could have been used for additional animals.

Not enough research has been done on the AUE for bison; each extension office publishes different values for bison. Utah State University Extension states that a mature bison has an AUE of 1.0 (Pratt & Rasmussen, 2001), while the Alberta Agriculture and Forestry Department states that a mature bison cow has an AUE of 1.5 and a mature bison bull has an AUE of 1.8 (Government of Alberta, 2003). Montana State University claims a mature bison cow has an AUE of 0.99 and a mature bison bull has an AUE of 1.5 (Lacey, n.d.). NRCS produced a detailed list of AUE in updated form in April 2006. Pursuant to this list, the yearlong AUE average of a mature bison cow that has a calf is 1.1 and the AUE for a mature bison bull is 1.5 (National Resources Conservation



Service, 2006). The new values produced by the NRCS in 2006 seem to be the most appropriate for bison as year-long averages.

Comparing the specific nutritional needs of bison and cattle, mature bison cows need dry matter intake of 1.6-1.8% of their body weight, 54-58% total digestible nutrients, 8% protein, 0.35% calcium, and 0.25 % phosphorus (Feist, n.d.). Mature beef cows need dry matter intake of 1.8% of their body weight, 50% total digestible nutrients, 7.1% protein, 0.17% calcium, and 0.14% phosphorus (Lalman, n.d.). Both bison and beef cattle usually need mineral supplementation throughout the year. The type and amount of minerals needed greatly depends on regional variances in forages consumed and other diet supplementation that results in a lack of specific minerals.

Using the AUE produced by the NRCS, a mature bison cow consumes 990 pounds of dry forage a month, 11,880 pounds a year. A mature bison bull consumes 1,350 pounds of dry forage a month, 16,200 pounds a year (National Resources Conservation Service, 2006). In research combined by Allen A. Steuter and Lori Hidingier for their paper *Comparative Ecology of Bison and Cattle on Mixed-Grass Prairie*, they noted that bison had lower forage selectivity to that of cattle, but that bison consumed less forbs and shrubs, and overall consumed a smaller percentage of available species. Bison allocated less time to grazing



## Stocking Rate, *cont. from pg 7*

activities than cattle did and had an overall lower diet quality. It is also important to note that bison prefer to graze in more open grasslands with rolling hills, rather than steep or woody environments preferred by cattle (Steuter & Hiding, 1999). The American Bison Society noted that the most commonly reported differences between bison and cattle are their use of the land, forage selection, digestion, and metabolic rates (American Bison Society, 2010). In their paper Comparison of Forage Intake and Digestibility by American Bison, Yak and Cattle, the authors fed the three species sedge, grass, and alfalfa and reported on the animal's digestibility and of the different types of feed. They found that bison digested all three feed types most efficiently. Bison are noted to be able to survive harsh environments due to their ability to digest low quality forages efficiently. However, when looking at performance measurements, cattle performed better than bison did when fed lower quality forage, seeing higher daily gains than bison while consuming the lower quality forage. Bison had higher performance measurements over cattle when fed higher quality feed (Richmond, Hudson, & Christopherson, 1977). The Canadian Bison Association states that a bison is better able to capture more nutrients from the forages it eats because it stays in its system longer than it would in cattle (Canadian Bison Association, n.d.). It was also noted by Steuter and Hiding that while the overall stocking rates for bison and cattle are similar, the amount of available forage consumed by bison is spread out over a 12-month period, whereas cattle consume the same amount of forage over a 6-month period of mid-May to mid-October (Steuter & Hiding, 1999).

The ability that bison have to sustain themselves on lower quality feed dur-

ing harsh weather events is of great importance. Steuter and Hiding noted that bison have lower metabolic rates during winter months compared to cattle, and have more than twice as much insulation. Metabolic rates for bison during the winter are 125 kcal/kg/day, whereas metabolic rates for cattle are 210 kcal/kg/day. Bison have a critical temperature of -46°C and cattle have a critical temperature of 13°C (Steuter & Hiding, 1999). Bison also have a thicker skin layer than cattle, as well as more hair follicles than cattle. Bison have long, thick hairs, called guard hairs, that help shed rain and snow, as well as an inner dense layer of hair that insulates their bodies. Studies have found that bison have significantly more hair follicles per square inch than cattle do (Olson, 2012), some say as many as eight times more (Bison Behavior and Management, n.d.). Bison also have a much larger head, neck, and rump muscles than cattle, which allow them to expend less energy clearing snow in search of forage. Bison are also able to source their daily water requirements from the consumption of snow when needed (Canadian Bison Association, n.d.). These physical attributes play a great roll in their ability to handle extreme cold environments.

Before Europeans came to America, and before settlers came across the great plains of America, the bison had a vast native range. They spanned from as far North as Alaska to as far south as present day Mexico City. They were found from the west coast to as far east as the New England area (Carter, 2015). This is of noted importance because of the environmental difference of this large area. The bison adapted well to the areas they were in, and thrived in these regions that featured extreme cold or extreme heat and humidity.

While it is hard to place dollar values on comparing bison and cattle and their stocking rates and nutritional

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needs, what can be summarized is their overall needs are very similar. They each have similar monthly forage intakes, but bison are able to survive in harsher conditions and adapt to all types of environments, both hot and cold and low and high altitudes. Cattle have higher performance values when consuming lower quality feed, but bison are able to better digest all types of feed more efficiently than cattle, enhancing their utilization of the feeds they consume. In the end, bison are better able to adapt to different types of environments, feed, pasture settings, and overall management strategies (Greaser, et al., 1995).





2016 Black Hills

# Buffalo Classic PRODUCER *of the* YEAR

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# 2016 RMBA Fall Tour - Friday, September 23

## Plains Conservation Center & Ralphie Handlers Team Practice

Mark your calendars for Friday, September 23rd beginning at 10:00 am for the event. Prairie Ridge Buffalo (Ray and Deb Thieman), Colorado Natural Buffalo (Dave and Laura Wentz), and Willow Creek Bison (Dave and Sue Carter) will be the hosts at the Plains Conservation Center, West Bijou Basin Ranch, Byers, Colorado. We will spend the day there looking at pastures, the animals, the facilities, having lunch, talking holistic management, and Tudi Arneill will be showing us some great items out there as well.

An exciting fall ranch visit has been planned for RMBA members and guests. Attendees will view our bison on the plains and observe the Savory grazing program that we are using. The corrals and handling facilities will also be shown. Buffalo burger lunch will be served. A short discussion about the Savory Grazing Program will follow the lunch. Tudi Arneill will also be sharing the history of the ranch, the KT Boundary, and show some of the fossils found there.

At 3:00 pm the group will travel to Prentup Field, University of Colorado, Boulder. John Graves and the Ralphie Handlers will demonstrate their practice and handling procedures with Ralphie, the live buffalo mascot for the University of Colorado, between 5:00 and 6:00 pm.



Dinner at The Kachina Grill Restaurant will be expecting our group to arrive around 6:30 pm for beverages and appetizers. A delicious ribeye steak dinner and lots of visiting will complete our evening.

We look forward to seeing everyone there!

Cost for members is \$60, non-members is \$75. Children are welcome \$45. Mail in Registration form or On-line at our website: [buffaloranchers.com](http://buffaloranchers.com).



With two sites totaling almost 9,000 acres, the Plains Conservation Center is an outdoor education facility and state-designated natural area. The 1,100-acre site in Aurora is located at 21901 E. Hampden Avenue. The West Bijou site, purchased in 2001 and added to in 2006, is located near the Arapahoe County/Elbert County line along West Bijou Creek, south of Strasburg, CO.

The Dust Bowl of the 1930s, one of the greatest ecological disasters in history, was also the impetus to create the

Plains Conservation Center, whose mission is to help insure something like the Dust Bowl never happens again.

Beginning in 1949 as the education center for the West Arapahoe Conservation District demonstrating prudent farming and ranching techniques, the PCC has grown as its audiences have. With vision, hard work, and persistence, the Plains Center staff and uncounted volunteers developed a facility that now shows the short grass prairie in its many guises to rural, suburban and urban visitors.

The Aurora site is home to pronghorn, prairie dogs, coyotes and prairie birds with 5 miles of trails for visitors to explore. Wells Crossing, the historic farm, harkens back to homesteading days of sod houses, one-room schools, heritage livestock and heirloom gardens. The Cheyenne Camp offers visitors a glimpse into the former semi-nomadic life of Plains Indians, including 4 stately tipis and their typical furnishings.

At the West Bijou Site, it boasts wide-open vistas, craggy ravines, 6 miles of creek and is uninterrupted by public roads. Scientific research projects, a bison herd and a feeling of vastness make this site the "jewel" that Bijou means in French.

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### - Tour Schedule -

#### FRIDAY, September 23

##### 10:00am - 3:00 pm Plains Conservation Center West Bijou Basin Ranch

60100 East CR 42, Strasburg, CO

From I-70 take the Strasburg exit, number 310. Take I-70 Frontage Road east, which turns in County Road 157. Go 11 miles South. Turn East on South Country Road 42. Go Approximately 2 miles to 60100 East County Road 42, turn South and the house is 1.4 miles down the dirt road.

##### 12:00 noon Buffalo Lunch served

##### 3:00 pm -6:00 pm Ralphie Handlers Practice Prentup Field, CU

33rd St, Boulder, CO 80303

Take I-70 west to I-25 North. Take US-36 west into Boulder and exit on Foothills Parkway, North. Go about 2 miles and turn west onto Colorado Avenue. Take your first left onto Discovery Drive, which will loop around and Prentup (Potts) Field will be to your right.

##### 6:30 pm Dinner Kachina Grill Restaurant

10600 Westminster Blvd Westminister, CO

From Boulder, take US-36 East for approximately 15 miles. Exit at Church Ranch Blvd toward 104th Ave. Turn left onto W 104th Ave. Turn left onto Westminister Blvd W. Kachina Grill will be on the right.





**2016 RMBA FALL TOUR  
REGISTRATION FORM  
September 23, 2016**

*REGISTRATION DEADLINE: September 7, 2016*

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Names (\*please include all that will be attending below)

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Ranch Name

---

Address

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City, State, Zip

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**Registration Fee Enclosed:**

# \_\_\_\_\_ Members @ \$60.00 each \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Members @ \$75 each \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ Children @ \$45 each \_\_\_\_\_  
16 and under

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**(Includes lunch and dinner)**

**REGISTRATION DUE: September 7, 2016**

Send to: Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association  
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**OR**

*Register ONLINE at the  
RMBA Official Web Site:*  
**buffaloranchers.com**

Fall Workshop information Ray Thieman at 719/771-8742 if you have questions.

\* Additional Names:



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## First Class



## Membership Application

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