



January 2019

# The Buffalo Rancher

Official Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association

## What's Happening

### January 23-26

NBA Winter Conference and Gold Trophy Show

### January 26

Gold Trophy Sale

### Late February

RMBA's New Website Launches

### March 2-3

RMBA Spring Conference

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### Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association

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Denver, CO 80209

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Moving Forward in 2019

A new year is upon us, which presents us with new opportunities, and maybe a few challenges.

In 2018, we saw a decline in carcass prices. Some say it was due to a softening of the market, some say it was a correction in the market after seeing record high prices the past few years. While the reduction in carcass price was not drastic, and prices are still strong, we do need to think about what ranchers need to do to remain financially strong, and support their bottom line.

Demand for bison meat is not diminishing. Colorado has some of the highest consumption of bison meat in the Nation. For several years now, most restaurants in Colorado offered a bison burger. Now those restaurants are expanding their bison offerings to include bison steaks. This is great news for our industry. As more restaurants offer delicious bison, consumers will seek it out to cook at home.



We need to continue to educate them on how to properly cook bison so their experience is good.

This demand will help to keep carcass prices high. As more farm to table restaurants open, we see them looking for locally grown food to offer their patrons - a good fit for bison, and a perfect fit for RMBA members who can provide these restaurants with a premium product, locally raised, with a good story behind it.

*Continued on page 2*

## Join Us for RMBA's Spring Conference



March 2-3, 2019  
Marriot Hotel  
Westminster, CO

More information on page 5.



## Board of Directors

### **PRESIDENT**

**John Graves**

*CU Ralphie Mascot  
Program  
303-887-9677*

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

**Debbie Thieman**

*Prairie Ridge Buffalo  
719-775-8742*

### **TREASURER**

**Patty Smith**

*Lay Valley Bison Ranch  
303-906-2638*

### **SECRETARY**

**Jen Graves**

*720-891-9360*

### **DIRECTOR**

**Ace Ward**

*Brush Meat Processors  
970-488-0003*

### **DIRECTOR**

**Nicole Jeffries**

*Nilisber Bison Ranch  
303-995-2783*

### **DIRECTOR**

**Tom Stelmach**

*Peak to Peak Ranch  
303-774-0562*

### **DIRECTOR**

**Kyle Stodola**

*Sun Rise Ranch  
720-364-0835*

Elections are held annually at the Spring General Membership Meeting. Meeting minutes & financials are available from the Board Secretary.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED**

Within our own region, the amount of hay and grass you were able to grow last summer varied. Some locations had ample growth while others had record low yields. Because of this, some of our members have plenty of hay and grass to keep their animals fed until spring, while others are bringing in supplemental hay from all over the place. Hay prices typically don't vary too much, but this year they seem to be all over the place. If you can find good hay at a good price, consider buying a few semi loads and split it with another rancher. Buying larger quantities can usually result in better negotiated rates, saving you some money.

Like any experienced bison rancher will tell you, **there is always more to learn about bison and the bison industry.** I continue to push the Board of Director's to work hard for this Association, as I continue to push myself to work hard, striving to always look forward

to what is to come.

As a board, we keep reflecting on what we are doing and how we can do things better for our members and the industry. My goal as President is to ensure this Association is one of the predominate associations in the nation and represents and supports members and our bison. As always, if you have issues, thoughts, questions, or just want to talk feel free to give me a call.

I hope to see you all at the NBA Winter Conference, as well as at our Spring Conference on March 2 and 3. Our spring conference will be a fantastic event with more presenters than we have ever had. If you have not been to one of our conferences, or have not been for a while, I strongly encourage you to come. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to seeing our regular members as well as our members we have not seen for a few years.

## **RMBA Members in 2019 Gold Trophy Show & Sale**

Be sure to check out these RMBA members who have consigned animals to the Gold Trophy Show and Sale. RMBA members have a long standing record of taking home top prices year after year at the GTSS and this year should be no different.

### **Market Class**

Cannan Bennett, CB Bison  
Scott Butcher, Diamond Tail Ranch  
Larry Higgins, Heart Rock Bison  
Josiah Higgins, Arickaree Bison Ranch  
Aaron Thieman, Big Sandy Bison  
Ray Thieman, Prairie Ridge Buffalo Ranch

### **Live Animal Class**

Tom Chaffin, Platte River Power Authority - Rawhide Energy Station  
Vance Forepaugh, Medicine Wheel Ranch  
Frank Wolthuis, Badger Basin Ranch



# Exciting RMBA Updates Coming to Fruition

*By John Graves, President*

The RMBA Board is passionately working to continually improve our services and support to members. We have some exciting updates coming up.

## New Website

The biggest update is the coming launch of our redesigned website. (The launch is currently scheduled for late February.) Board Secretary Jen Graves has been working with DigiSage, Inc. to design and implement a new site. They have partnered to ensure every picture, element, content, and functionality meets the needs of our website users.

I receive about five calls a week to the RMBA number from people looking to buy bison meat, animals, facilitate hunts, plus many other questions. When they call, I usually direct them to the list of our members on our website and tell them to contact certain people. Our new website will more prominently display and instruct users to find what our members have to offer so they can quickly contact the right person. This new feature will help members connect with potential customers faster and easier!

Beyond a redesigned layout, we

are removing some administrative burden for conference registrations, expanding educational content, and improving the process for membership renewal.

We have enough web traffic to our site to make it profitable, so we will also have space for advertisements. This will be a new way for ranchers and/or vendors to promote their product or event. We will soon be reserving these spaces. If interested, contact Jen Graves at jennifer.nmn.gray@gmail.com or 720-891-9360.

Thank you to Jen Graves for all her hard work making this happen.

## Updated Logo

This spring the RMBA Board worked with a graphic designer to recreate our logo files for better print production. (The new version is on the front page.) This also led us to a few changes to enable us to be consistent with our front and branding. Which brings me to our next update...

## Updated Newsletter

You probably noticed a change in the format of this newsletter. We have great readership of our newsletter and in keeping with

changing times, we decided to make some changes to layout of the newsletter. We hope you like it! Please provide us any feedback to [info@buffaloranchers.com](mailto:info@buffaloranchers.com).

## Labeling Issues

RMBA continues to work on the water buffalo labeling issue that has developed in both pet food and human food. To avoid confusion, we want water buffalo to be labeled as water buffalo.

We have been in contact with elected officials from both houses in the Colorado and Wyoming legislature, as well as with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. We also had a very productive meeting with the Colorado Department of Agriculture. We want to thank RMBA member and NBA Executive Director Dave Carter for his continued work on this issue at the federal level as well as his help assisting RMBA at the state level.

## USDA Bison Reports

We will continue to send out the monthly USDA bison reports to our members. This data is available on the USDA website, but it is hard to find, so we figure we will do the work for you.

## Thank You Laurie Dineen!

The RMBA Board would like to recognize Laurie Dineen for her years of hard work on our newsletter! RMBA is finally giving her the opportunity for a break because *The Buffalo Rancher* has been designed and published by Laurie for many years. She has coordinated advertising, created filler content, folded, sealed, sent (and so much more) to make every issue the best it can be. THANK YOU LAURIE!!

## Thank You!

A big thank you to **Tiffany Castle** of Tiffany Castle Photography and **Greg Nott** of Big Heart Bison Ranch for providing outstanding pictures for our new website!







## RMBA Tours Beaver Creek Buffalo Ranch

*By Jen Graves, Board Secretary*

The Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association held their fall ranch tour on September 8 at Beaver Creek Buffalo Ranch near Goodland, Kansas. This uniquely managed native grassland is an oasis in northwestern Kansas and consists of several contiguous ranches that total approximately 4,000 acres.

The ranch is a joint venture of Ken Klemm & family and Peter Thieriot & family. Their dual purpose is to be the premier supplier of pure grass-fed and finished buffalo meat and be the industry leader in providing grass-based genetics for ranchers in the U.S.

The tour included views of the pastures, a demonstration of Ken moving a herd from one pasture to another, a trailer ride for an up-close view of one herd, and a walking tour of fencing and working facilities. Additionally, Ken provided an exceptional garage space with tables and chairs for the group to comfortably eat lunch and discuss multiple important topics.

Ken provides a wealth of knowledge as someone who is

consistently trying new things. His experiences with multiple sales approaches (i.e. online, farmer's markets, direct sales to restaurants), grass and grain finishing, food labeling and so much more, made him a valuable resource as the group asked questions. "You are never done learning," said Klemm.

For attendees, the fall tour was a great opportunity to learn, network and chat. We had representatives from four non-

member ranches in attendance (which we love to see) and the group eventually started talking about why they were in the bison industry. Ken eloquently summarized his view that we get into the business to impact the bison, but they impact us for the better.

Up next: The Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association has planned a robust spring conference for March 2-3, 2019 that you will not want to miss.



Ken Klemm explains his working facilities during RMBA's fall tour of Beaver Creek Buffalo Ranch.

*photos by Jen Graves*





# Join us for RMBA's Spring Conference

**March 2 - 3, 2019**  
**Marriott Hotel**  
**Westminster, CO**

## **Saturday, March 2 includes:**

- Board of Directors Meeting
- General Membership Meeting & Elections
- Bison Handling System Design & Materials - *Darren Post, High Plains Cattle Supply*
- Bison Corral, Alleys & Fence Design & Materials - *Les Carberry, Bison Pipe and Supply*
- Bison and Minerals - *Wendell Mickelsen, Redmond Minerals*
- Supplemental Feeding Nutrition - *Cadra Van Bibber-Krueger, Ranch Way Feeds & Rob Pischel*
- Social Time, Bison Dinner Banquet, Bison Bingo & Benefit Auction

## **Sunday, March 3 includes:**

- Special Program Certifications (Animal Welfare, Grass-fed, Non-GMO, Organic) - *Callie Casteel, A Greener World*
- Bison Product Labeling Regulations - *Dr. Jennifer Martin, Colorado State University*
- Commercial Motor Vehicles Rules, Regulations, and Exemptions - *John Graves*
- Introduction to Holistic Management - *Patrick Toomey, Crossroads Ranch Consulting*
- Creating a Grazing Plan/Calendar - *Patrick Toomey, Crossroads Ranch Consulting*
- Bison Vaccination Programs, Performing Injections & Minor Procedures - *Dr. Tim Holt, Colorado State University*
- Bison Lunch, Social Time & Bison Knife Raffle

## **- March Board Elections -**

Elections for our Board of Directors will be held at the General Membership Meeting. President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer & two Directors are up for election every year. If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact Patty Smith (pat@accsoftassociates.com).

## **- Buffalo vs. Bison -**

By request, we will discuss changing our name to the Rocky Mountain Bison Association at the General Membership Meeting.

Register online at [www.buffaloranchers.com/workshops](http://www.buffaloranchers.com/workshops) or by completing the registration form below (both sides) & sending it (with payment) to RMBA.

The conference will be held at the Marriott Hotel Westminster (7000 Church Ranch Boulevard in Westminster). Reserve a hotel room at our special room rate (\$110 per night) by calling the hotel directly at 720-887-1177 & mentioning RMBA or by visiting: <https://book.passkey.com/go/RMBA2019>. **Deadline to reserve a room is February 8, 2019.**

See reverse side for registration fees.

## **RMBA Spring Conference Registration**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ranch Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Make it easier for  
yourself & us:  
**sign up online at**  
**buffaloranchers.com**

**Registration Due: February 18, 2019**

**Send to:** Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association  
303 S Broadway, Suite B522  
Denver, CO 80209

# Upcoming Bison Events

**February 1 - 2, 2019**

**Dakota Territory Buffalo Association Winter Conference**

For more information, visit their newly redesigned website at [www.dakotabuffalo.com/event/2019-winter-conference](http://www.dakotabuffalo.com/event/2019-winter-conference).

**February 2, 2019**

**Dakota Territory Buffalo Association's Black Hills Buffalo Classic**

Animals will be sold in person, as well as by photo or video bidding. Online video will be available at [www.bradeenauction.hibbid.com](http://www.bradeenauction.hibbid.com). For more information on the sale, contact Patrick Toomey at (605) 519-1326 or visit [www.bradeenauction.com](http://www.bradeenauction.com).

**February 11 - 13, 2019**

**Diamond Tail Ranch Power Genetics Auction**

These performance tested bulls are for sale online for three days, closing at 5 p.m. (MT) on Feb. 13. Visit [www.diamonddailranch.com](http://www.diamonddailranch.com) for videos of bulls, sale terms and more details.

**March 2 - 3, 2019**

**Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association Spring Conference**

Join us for our annual spring conference and annual elections at the Marriott Hotel in Westminster, CO. More information is on page 5 or register online at [www.buffaloranchers.com](http://www.buffaloranchers.com).

**March 7-9, 2019**

**Eastern Bison Association Winter Conference**

EBA is holding their 2019 winter conference in Harrisburg, PA. For more information or to register, visit [www.ebabison.org](http://www.ebabison.org).



## RMBA Classified Advertising

### TRANSPORTATION

Dan Martin will haul your buffalo. No distance too far. Call: 970-629-2859.

### BUFFALO GAL YARNS

Jill Klawonn at High Point Bison has four different buffalo yarns available. We offer fine hand-knit garments or you can create a one of a kind piece. Call 970-895-3303 or email: [hpbison@ncolcomm.com](mailto:hpbison@ncolcomm.com)

## YOUR AD COULD BE HERE!

Contact Jen to place your ad before the next issue! Email [jennifer.nmn.gray@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.nmn.gray@gmail.com).

### Classifieds

RMBA members receives one FREE ad per issue.

### Business Cards

Advertising in the RMBA newsletter costs just \$40 for the entire year (4 issues) or just \$10/issue for Members.

All ads must be pre-paid.

## Spring Conference Registration Fees

**Full Weekend:**

#\_\_\_\_\_ Members @ \$160/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Non-Members @ \$200/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Children @ \$50/ea.

**Saturday Only:**

#\_\_\_\_\_ Members @ \$95/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Non-Members @ \$115/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Children @ \$30/ea.

**Sunday Only:**

#\_\_\_\_\_ Members @ \$85/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Non-Members @ \$105/ea.      #\_\_\_\_\_ Children @ \$30/ea.

**Total # of Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_**

Make checks payable to: Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association.  
To pay by credit card, register online at [www.buffaloranchers.com](http://www.buffaloranchers.com).



**WE KNOW A THING OR TWO, BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN A THING OR TWO**

## **Where the Buffalo Roam**

*By Greg Nott, Big Heart Bison*

One of the first things we learn about buffalo is from the infamous song, "Oh give me a home, where the buffalo roam...". Yes, they do like to roam.

This past spring I had the bright idea to put mineral out in a plastic tub. Of course, by the time I made it back to the house they had tipped it over and were now playing soccer with it. I figured I would wait until they were off grazing somewhere else before I attempted to retrieve it. The next morning I discovered I had waited too long. A yearling bull named Chaim now had it on his head. My first response was to grab my camera. As I stood on the front porch recording this event, Tami was asking what we should do. I'll be honest, I had no clue whatsoever.

Then instinct kicked in and Chaim decided to roam. This wasn't a leisurely walk or a brisk trot, but a full out run. And of course, the others joined in. We watched in disbelief realizing the impending train wreck that was



*photos by Greg Nott*

about to occur. They were running straight at a fence. And right through the fence he went, right between the hot wires. Amazingly, nothing broke and the rest of the herd stopped, inside the fence. Chaim had also stopped and was standing still in the ditch. We stood there in shock for a brief moment and then ran for my truck.

The rest of the herd was standing

at the fence as we eased up near him. I imagine his mother was having the same frustrated thoughts that we were having about raising teenage boys. I started talking to him as I got out of the truck. He seemed calm and stood still as I approached him. I noticed that the lip of the tub was stuck on one of his horns. I decided I had one shot at pulling it off and making a frantic leap back into the truck. I grabbed, he jerked and off he went, running down the ditch, tub still intact. But then he stopped, shook his head and the tub fell off. When Chaim realized he had strayed, he wanted back in with the herd, and through the fence he went. Right between the hot wires, this time back where he belonged.

Lesson learned, choose your feeding vessels wisely.



# Highlighting RMBA's Lifetime Members

We asked three lifetime RMBA members to tell us a little about themselves.

## Patty Smith

### *Lay Valley Bison Ranch*

When John requested an article from me as a RMBA lifetime member, I realized that I really have been in this business for most of a lifetime. Years and years ago (1973), my ex-husband, Ron Smith and I started The Bisonsmiths south of Yuma CO with 10 calves. That herd grew to about 250 before we sold out in 1984. At that time I took my favorite cow to Dan Martin's Lay Valley Bison Ranch and I have been active in that operation since then.

Our philosophy is expressed in our handouts and signs - we raise our bison naturally, chemical free, under low stress conditions with respect and care. We sell mostly retail to individuals directly from the ranch and at farmers' markets, packaged meat or halves and quarters, hunts and some breeding stock. I am the "data keeper" for the ranch - managing the data base of animals, the ear



tags, the mailing list, the taxes, etc. etc. During roundup, I don't do much herding or sorting (not my strong suit) but I get to decide which animal goes to which pen - so if they're in the wrong place - it's then my fault!

One of the best memories of this many year bison endeavor is just sitting in the pasture and watching the herd - at any time, but especially in the spring with the new calves. I've always said I wish someone would pay me to do that - I'm happy to do it for

hours!

Call me crazy - but I continue to enjoy being directly involved with bison associations - I am a founder of the ABA (a predecessor of the now NBA) and a founder of RMBA. I have been a board member, secretary/treasurer and vice president of both associations. I am currently treasurer of RMBA. One of the joys of being so involved in the associations is getting to know the people.

**Buffalo people are the best!**



## Nicole Jeffries

### *Nilisber Bison Ranch*

In 2002, I was 15 and my father purchased our family's first 13 bison calves establishing Nilisber (Nih-l-ih-s-ber) Bison Ranch. At that time, I was slightly disappointed they weren't a herd of horses, but was mesmerized by the bison. Their grace and beauty captivated my attention immediately. That is the

moment this unique creature had become my passion, a passion my family shares with me.

We outgrew our small acreage property so in 2014 Nilisber Bison Ranch purchased a much larger property with plenty of room for growth. The last few years, our primary focus has been cleaning up, re-planting, and establishing the pastures. Fencing has been an ongoing project that is still evolving.

Growing up and being involved with the bison associations has

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been an honor. One of my most memorable conferences with the National Bison Association is when I was in grade school and saw a white bison on a reservation in North Dakota. The experience was almost magical seeing her off by herself with a little red calf. The Association also provided bison shoulder bones for the 'kids' to paint and then auctioned off for a fund raiser. It was such a blast and a memorable moment painting with my two younger sisters and other kids in the bison

community.

Another memorable bison adventure was in high school, my family visited a private bison herd on the side of a volcano in Hawaii. Their silhouettes formed into a herd of bison as they sauntered out of a low-hanging cloud.

Until 2017, I had only done bison works with my own herd. I had the opportunity to aid McMurtrey Ranch in Nebraska for their main herd works. It was an amazing experience participating in works for a larger herd than my own. I had my first experience

with preg-checking bison! With over 2,500 head of bison, the experience was nothing similar to my small operation. I have learned SO much and appreciated the great opportunity.

The Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association and National Bison Association have provided opportunities to network with other ranchers and pick their brains. Growing up in the industry has provided me with many opportunities and fond memories I will always cherish.

## **Dwayne Osadchuk**

### ***Lucky 8 Ranch***

Lucky 8 Ranch, established in 2014, is family owned and operated. It had always been Dwayne's dream to own his own ranch since he was a child visiting and working on his family's farms in Canada. That dream became a reality after a quick road trip around Colorado with his loving wife Tina in 2012.

Lucky 8 currently manages 1,200 acres of varying terrain nestled along Trout Creek in Oak Creek, CO. Along with our varying terrain we have vast panoramic views of Routt County that leave us speechless when out working in the fields. About half of the ranch is located on a reclaimed coal strip mine, which we have been continually reclaiming back to a grassland state. We manage over 200 head of bison along with horses, alpaca, llama, chickens, and ducks. We purchased our first bison in 2015 and quickly grew our herd, sourcing animals from all over.



Why did we choose bison over other livestock? Well... They look really cool and taste great. Over the last 3 years of raising these majestic beasts we have learned there is much more to these animals than what most people assume. After learning more about the bison tale, one really becomes humbled to be in their presence day after day.

Currently our bison operation is still growing and we only butcher a select number of animals per year selling some packaged meats, but most has been by the

portion to local buyers. We hope within the next couple years we will be able to supply our meats to local restaurants in the area full time.

We also run an agritourism operation at our ranch offering horseback rides, ATV tours and snowmobile tours. Guests can come and learn the American Bison Tale and how they have stood the test of time and man. Along with the tours the ranch is a special event and wedding venue. Lucky 8 also has its own spice and seasoning line coming from family recipes handed down from generations. We love supporting our community, especially the Routt County 4-H. This year we received an award from the 4-H for being a business friend of Routt County 4-H.

Things we have learned since managing a herd of bison: have patience, respect, and DO NOT grab a calf without an escape route.



303 South Broadway  
Suite B522  
Denver, Colorado 80209  
303-243-0900

[www.buffaloranchers.com](http://www.buffaloranchers.com)

## First Class

### RMBA Membership Application

Membership: ☐ New ☐ Renewal

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$50/yr.                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Lifetime - \$1,000 once |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dual ( <i>couples</i> ) - \$85/yr.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dual Lifetime - \$1,500 once       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior ( <i>20 years old and under</i> ) - \$10/yr. |   |

Make it easier for  
yourself & us:  
**sign up online at**  
**[buffaloranchers.com](http://buffaloranchers.com)**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Ranch/Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Ranch Address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Website \_\_\_\_\_

Select the services you offer (for free advertisement on our website):

- |  |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buffalo Sales           | <input type="checkbox"/> Meat Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Product Sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Processing              | <input type="checkbox"/> Tours      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Absentee Owner Programs |                                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____            |                                     |   |

**Mail To:**

Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association  
303 South Broadway, Suite B522  
Denver, Colorado 80209