



December 2014

The Buffalo Rancher

Official Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Buffalo Association

Important Dates:

PLAN TO ATTEND!

2015

January 21-24
GTSS and NBA Winter
Conference
Denver, CO (see pg 7)

April 24-25
Peak to Peak
Conference
Loveland, CO (see pg. 4)

In This Issue:

- Page 2 — President's Message
- Page 3 — RMBA 2015 Elections and Fun Auction
- Page 4 — Ralphie Handlers and 2015 Peak to Peak Conference update
- Page 5 — Bison in Belgium
- Page 7 — NBA Updates & Classified Ads

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

(c) Copyright 2006

All Rights Reserved. No reprints or reproductions in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher.

Newsletter Chair: Patty Smith
Proof Reading: Jill Crotty

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

RMBA Fall Workshop Blue Valley Ranch

By: Patty Smith

We ventured across the mountains for the 2014 fall workshop - started in Silverthorne for a board meeting with all of the board and a couple of others who just can't seem to stay away. Then everyone met at the Red Mountain Grill for a social hour



with some yummy appetizers followed by dinner. The main dinner featured delicious bison prime rib - enjoyed by all! It was nice to visit with both old and new friends!

The next day we drove to Blue Valley Ranch along the Blue River between Silverthorne and Kremmling on Highway 9. Livestock manager for the ranch, Josh Richert, met us at their gate and we caravanned in to the main ranch area where Josh gave us the overview of the ranch.

The 25,000 acre Blue Valley Ranch where Bison have called home since 1996 and have become iconic to the ranch's identity as well as an important part of its agricultural produc-



Continued on page 3

2014 - 2015 RMBA Board of Directors

Pictured left to right:
Tudi Arneill, Debbie Thieman, Boyd Meyer, Larry Higgins, John Graves and Tom Stelmach. (Dave Hayes is not pictured).





2013 - 2014
Board of
Directors

PRESIDENT
Larry Higgins
Heart Rock Bison
719/763-2439

VICE PRESIDENT
Debbie Thieman
Prairie Ridge Buffalo
719/775-8742

SEC-TREASURER
Tudi Arneil
303/921-5632

DIRECTOR 13/14
David Hayes
Spomer Bison Ranch
970/587-2001

DIRECTOR 13/14
Boyd Meyer
Cold Creek Bison
970/396-2249

DIRECTOR 14/15
John Graves
Ralphie's Riders
303/887-9677

DIRECTOR 14/15
Tom Stelmach
Peak to Peak Ranch
303/774-0562

RMBA Official Web Site:
buffaloranchers.com

All RMBA meeting minutes
and financials are available from
Secretary-Treasurer Tudi Arneil

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Switching gears from the usual chatter of weather and happenings in the buffalo industry, I want to applaud the recent endeavor of one of our own RMBA members. To start, let me say I am not an expert on the subject, have my own convictions, and know that many are passionate about it. It, being politics, the person, Bob Beauprez, agriculture minded, and a well rounded person who knows what hard work is.

Coming from a dairy background, they then moved into the buffalo industry, a great choice by the way, and is also actively involved in the world of politics and has helped shape an ideal that many embrace.

Thank you Bob and Claudia for the strong showing in the recent elections in Colorado. For those of you not in Colorado, or have been under a rock, Mr. Beauprez lost by the narrowest of margins in recent history for Governor. You see, to most people east of the Mississippi, oh, and California, Colorado is seen as the wild west, and if it can be tamed, the rest will follow.

Apparently, Bob, you have opened the eyes of many and renewing my hope for this state. Your platform was so refreshing opposed to your main stream, buffalo chipping, puppet thinking opponent. Okay, that might be a little strong and opinionated, but this Colorado native does not agree with the ultra-liberal ideals that are flooding our state and nation. So, I guess you know what side of the fence I am on, apparently the same side as Mr. Bob Beauprez. With that said, thanks again for your effort and sacrifice, it is much appreciated, and am pleased to say I know you and your family. Keep up the good fight, and job well done.

Looking forward, we are making a

move north to Loveland, Colorado for the RMBA Peak to Peak Spring Conference and Meeting which will take place April 24th and 25th 2015.

All meetings will be held at the Embassy Suites in Loveland. We are excited with the new location, and the line-up of speakers and topics. While nutrition will be the focus, leasing/absentee ownership will be on the agenda, and we are going to get an inside look at the "Ralphie Runner" program at the University of Colorado with another one of our members, John Graves. John is currently assistant director of the program.

We at Heart Rock Bison are especially pumped, as they visited us a couple of months ago! Hope you all can make it, and as always there will be fun, food and fellowship. Also remember the fun auction items.

Finally, from Heart Rock Bison to you and your families, we wish you Merry Christmas and a great New Year!!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:14

Thank you & God Bless,

Larry Higgins

— **SAVE THE DATE** —
**PEAK TO PEAK
CONFERENCE**
April 24-25 2015
Loveland, CO



Fall Workshop, *cont. from pg 1*

tion program which they have built to a manageable herd size currently of 130 cows. Hay production and a beef cow herd also make up the duties of Richert as well maintaining the streams, fences and wildlife that abound on the ranch.



an amazing tour of the ranch. Tudi, Tom & Shirley Stelmach and I were lucky enough to ride with Josh, so

To really get a good idea of the lay of the land and to see the bison herd, attendees regrouped into less vehicles and then took



answered questions. And then, if to say "we're done".. they all took off running up the hillside at a rapid speed.

It was a beautiful fall day and we even got up into the changing aspen. I think there were as many photos taken of



we got the commentary for the entire tour. The ranch has it's own bugling elk herd and Josh was hoping they would perform for us but they weren't to be found.

We were able to look at the bison herd as they made their way across the pasture while Josh



the scenery as there were of the buffalo that day!

Once we finished the awesome tour, we gathered for a fun buffalo burger lunch - thanks to Larry & Jacki Higgins for furnishing the buffalo. It was a great day and

made it hard to return to the front range and the traffic!

ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP - WE NEED YOU!

If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact Patty Smith at 303-906-2638 or pat@accsof-tassociates.com. The board will have at least two positions up for election and the officers are elected every year. As a past board member, I have found being on the board is fun and educational and a good way to give back to the industry. Please consider helping out - new ideas are always welcome!

2015 Fun Auction Alert!

Take advantage of the Holiday Shopping and save big on items for the Fun Auction!

Patty Smith, Chairman

Start thinking about fun auction items now! When you are out shopping for other things remember you need to be ready with your items in April - I know it seems a long time from now - but how many times has the day of the banquet and auction arrived and you don't have any idea what you are bringing. Remember this is our only fund raiser for the year and we need to make it a good one!

Peak to Peak Conference is April 24-25, 2015

Ralphie Handlers Visit Buffalo Ranches to Further Their Knowledge

By John Graves

The University of Colorado Boulder campus has arguably the best live mascot in all of college sports. News outlets such as ESPN, Fox Sports, Associated Press, Sporting News, and many more consistently rank CU's live mascot in the top 3, if not #1, greatest mascots or game day entrances in all of college sports.

The mascot at CU is Ralphie, a live buffalo that leads the football team onto the field at the start of each home football game. The tradition of running Ralphie started back in 1967, and the current Ralphie is 8 years old and she is in her 7th season running.

While CU is not an agriculture school, the task of her care and handling is done by 15 students and 2 directors. These student athletes are part of the school's athletic department and earn a varsity letter for their part as "Ralphie Handlers." They spend around 30 hours per week doing team related functions, twice a week they train with Ralphie for about an hour, twice a week for two hours they are in the weight room working on their speed and strength, and the remainder of time is spent on game days and other public related events.

Game days for the team are very time intensive, starting with a very early morning team breakfast, then out to Ralphie's ranch for cleaning of the pastures, and other required tasks. After that, it is the drive to campus to set Ralphie up for fans to come see her and take pictures with her before the game. Finally, the most iconic event happens when Ralphie charges down



the field with the whole football team behind her as the stadium erupts in celebration.

When Ralphie is available for the public to see, the Handlers are there to ensure the fans do not get too close to Ralphie, but also to answer any questions they have about CU, Ralphie, and buffalo in general. The Ralphie program takes great pride in the care they provide for Ralphie, often times being mentioned by other schools with live mascots as a school to emulate. And while the Ralphie Handlers are amazing athletes who are fast enough and strong enough to keep up with a buffalo and hold on to her, they also need the ability to effectively communicate with the public about Ralphie and buffalo. While hitting the gym for these guys and girls is something they have been doing most of their lives, understanding livestock, and buffalo, is something that is new to them. Most students who apply to be a Ralphie Handler have very little agriculture experience, if at all, and what they do have is normally that they went on a trail ride with horses when they were at a summer camp. To help the Handlers get a better understanding of agriculture and buffalo, the team takes a yearly trip to a buffalo ranch to get some hands on learning.

I started annual ranch visits with the Ralphie Handler team to broaden their understanding about buffalo, ranching, animal handling, and the uniqueness of working with this magnificent animal. We first ventured down to Vermejo Park Ranch in Northern New Mexico in 2008 for an informative tour of their operation. Ted Turner has donated the past two Ralphie to the school, with the current Ralphie com-

2015 Peak to Peak Conference & Meeting

The Embassy Suites in Loveland, Colorado will be the new venue for the 2015 Conference, the dates being April 24th & 25th. We are excited with the move from Denver, and again will have relevant topics and interesting speakers. Nutrition will be the main focus with a new and entertaining twist.

Rachel Murph, from USDA, will again speak on range and pasture management focusing on the nutritional aspect. Boyd Meyer will have his nutritionist talking on the complete spectrum of feed. We also will have a panel type discussion on leasing/absentee ownership with some of our own members, and finally we are pleased to announce that the University of Colorado "Ralphie Runners" will be present to discuss the program and the handling of "Ralphie." That is our tentative Saturday schedule.

Friday will feature the General Business Meeting & Elections followed by a social hour, prime rib dinner, buffalo of course, and our fun auction. We again would like to encourage you to bring auction items to help support and fund RMBA.

Hope to see you all there. As we get closer we will send out more information and a finalized agenda. Remember the conference will be held in Loveland!!!

ing from Vermejo Park.

For the next several years, the team travelled to Diamond Tail Ranch in Northern Colorado where RMBA member Scott Butcher and his staff gave the team a detailed tour of their facilities, operation, and animals. While on the ranch, the team always had tons of questions that Scott and his employees are able to answer. For those that have been to Diamond Tail

Continued on page 6



Our Visit with Jean-Francois d'Hoffschmidt at Bison D'Ardenne - Bastongne, Belgium

By: Laurie Dineen

Bob and I had the trip of a lifetime this past fall traveling first to Dijon, France for a Barge cruise on the Prosperite', celebrating our 30th anniversary, then adding a side trip to visit fellow bison rancher, Jean-Francois d'Hoffschmidt and his bison ranches, one in France and one in the southern Ardennes hills in Bastogne, Belgium. Hind-sight was we wished we would have planned more days to spend with Jean-Francois and touring his country. Many may know Jean, or have seen him at some of the NBA conferences over the past years. I first met him in 1988 while working for the then, American Buffalo Association. Jean's story is incredible to say the least and what he has accomplished for the bison industry in Europe is amazing and one I wanted to share with all of you.

His interest in bison began in 1987 after reading an article in an Ag. paper in Belgium from a Journalist who



Bison herd in France

attended a meeting in Chicago. Jean was still studying at the time and not certain about his future on the family dairy farm. He said that he read this article a thousand times and started to dream about bison. There was not much information available at the time so he decided to travel to the U.S. and visit some bison ranches. During the summer of 1988 Jean visited with Jerry Oleson from Traverse City, MI, where Jean said "he was extremely kind but I was not able to communi-



Bison herd in France

cate with him due to my poor English". So he started off on a hitch hiking trip from there. "I had the chance to meet with wonderful people who just reinforced my will to go ahead with becoming a bison rancher: Patty Lee in Indiana, the NBA staff in Fort Pierre, Tom LeFaive, John Flocchini, yourself at the ABA office and then Bob."

In 1989, Jean bought a few animals from European zoos (including some wood bison). But that was not a good base to grow from, so he attended the GTSS in 1990 and had the chance to spend time with Doc Ken. In August 1990, just married, Yolande and he attended the ABA summer conference in New Rockford, ND where he started to discuss possibility to import live animals from the U.S. with Doc Ken and Richard Sarazin.

Back in Belgium, it took Jean a while to organize it all, but he eventu-

ally got an import permit for 100 bison calves that were air freighted from Chicago to Brussels in the lower deck of passenger flights in 1992. The next year, he did the same. Shortly after that, EU rules made it too difficult to import live hooved animals from the States. His bison herd



Jean with CoCo - orphaned calf that is hit of the farm

became pretty much the foundation of many European herds today.

Once the bison started to calve in 1994, Jean sold the dairy cows and started to renovate the old buildings into accommodations for tourists. Today, the bison farm in Belgium has about 200 head of bison with same number on the farm in France.

In the meantime, Jean approached Michel Fraiture, who was "the best butcher in town", and together they began marketing bison meat from the animals raised on



Bison Cow herd in Belgium



Bison over looking the Countryside & Bob with Jean - Francios

our farm, but above that, we've had the chance to meet many wonderful people and make good friends in different countries. That's the best part of the story", John exclaimed.



The grounds at farm Bison D'Ardenne, Bastogne, Belgium

The best part of our story was that Bob and I had a great time seeing the countryside, the bison and visiting with Jean and his family as well as Michel and his wife Lucy. We are truly blessed with the greatness this industry has to offer!

the farm. They developed such a great market and it wasn't long before Jean could no longer supply the demand with just his animals. Bison & Co. was established and

they have been importing bison meat from the US since 1991 to service their growing European accounts. "Raising bison has not only been good for



Popular restaurant that features bison on the menu



Jean-Francios, Yolanda, Michel, Lucy, Bob, Laurie

Ralphie Runners,

cont. from pg 4

Ranch, you know that it would be considered a large-scale buffalo operation with about 700 mother cows.

This year the team made a trip to Heart Rock Bison where RMBA President Larry Higgins and his wife Jacki gave the team a tour of their operation. Larry's operation is smaller than Scott's with about 50 mother cows, but like any experienced buffalo rancher knows, everyone's operation is different and this allowed the Handlers to get a new and different understanding of working with the buffalo.

The annual team trip is something Handlers always looks forward to; it

is a highlight for them. It provides them an example of how their buffalo skills could be put to use after college, how herds of buffalo are moved (since we only work with Ralphie by herself), and a better understanding of the differences between our "domestic" Ralphie and those on bison on the range.

The knowledge we learn about buffalo on these trips, the stories and experiences back to Ralphie's fans when the team is out in public. Fans enjoy hearing about the Handlers difference experiences and are always in awe about the facts they hear about buffalo and Ralphie.

For more information on the Ralphie Handlers and Ralphie herself, come to the Peak-to-Peak Conference



this spring to see a presentation from the Ralphie Handlers and be able to ask any questions you might have.



National Bison Association Updates

Set aside these dates for the NBA Winter Conference and GTS&S!
January 21-24

NBA Winter Conference to Offer Smorgasbord of Information

Producers-and potential producers-attending the 2015 National Bison Association Winter Conference at the Renaissance Hotel in Denver January 21-23 will be able to graze from a virtual smorgasbord of information during a series of break-out tracks on Thursday, January 22nd.

"Our planning committee recognizes that we have a lot of diversity within our business, and has done a great job of developing some break-out sessions that will allow people to pick up information from experts within those topic areas," said Jim Matheson, NBA assistant director.

Breakout sessions will include:
Telling your bison story and branding;

Grazing and pasture management;
Value-added from byproducts;

Bison meat regulations and labeling rules;

Animal handling and pen design;
and

Absentee ownership - cooperatives.

The conference will again feature a Mentor's Session on Thursday morning, where newcomers to the business can pick up pointers and insight from a panel of bison veterans.

The NBA Winter Conference agenda is now posted on the NBA website, at www.bisoncentral.com. Members are encouraged to register early, using the on-line registration form. Lodging reservations can be made by contacting the Renaissance Hotel at 1-303-800-1314 by January 5, 2015 to reserve your room at the conference rate of \$124/night with breakfast for two, or \$119/night without the breakfast (Single/Double Occupancy). Be sure to mention the National Bison Association when making your reservation.

National Buffalo Foundation Sponsors Symposium

The National Buffalo Foundation (NBF) Board of Directors have voted unanimously to sponsor the First International Symposium on Bison Health, scheduled to take place June 24-26, 2015 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

"I'm hoping that there will be many delegates from the veterinary profession and scientific community, the bison farming community, product processing and sales, and government industry regulators" Dr. Woodbury noted. "Animal health is of interest to everyone involved. The need to offer education on bison health for veterinarians and producers alike is crucial to expand the pool of those willing to provide service to bison operations."

At the NBA Winter Conference Fun Auction, a lucky buyer(s) will be able to purchase a full symposium package including a large room with beautiful views of the river. Consider bidding on a symposium package for yourself or a veterinarian. in your area! Visit our web site for more information. (<http://www.radisson.com/saskatoon-hotel-sk-s7k6x6/sksaskat/hotel>)

RMBA Classified

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 me at: hpbison@ncolcomm.com

Your ad could be here!

Call to place your **FREE** ad before the next issue!

303/857-9306

RATES:

Classifieds —
Each RMBA member receives one **FREE** ad/issue.

Business Cards —
Advertising in the RMBA newsletter costs just \$45 for the entire year (5-6 issues) or just \$10/issue.

All ads must be pre-paid.
Contact Laurie Dineen to place your ad today!
laurie@greatrangebison.com

Classified Advertising Pays - especially when it's FREE!

Save the Date

- 01/09/2015 - Montana Bison Association Annual Meeting - MT
- 01/10/2015 - North Dakota Buffalo Association Conference and Sale - ND
- 01/21/2015 - NBA Winter Conference - Denver, CO
- 01/24/2015 - NBA Gold Trophy Show and Sale - Denver, CO
- 02/06/2015 - Dakota Territory Buffalo Assn. Conference - SD
- 02/08/2015 - Bidding Deadline - Power Genetics Sale - CO
- 02/08/2015 - Black Hills Buffalo Classic Show and Sale - SD
- 02/09/2015 - The Keys to Successful Bison and Land Management Seminar
- 03/14/2015 - Northwest Bison Association General Meeting
- 04/17/2015 - Minnesota Buffalo Assn. Education Conference - MN
- 04/24/2015 - Rocky Mtn. Buffalo Assn - Peak to Peak Conference - CO
- 05/31/2015 - Texas Bison Association Spring Membership Meeting - TX
- 06/01/2015 - NBA Summer Conference in the Forth Worth Stockyards - TX





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

www.buffaloranchers.com

First Class



Membership Application

Join Today!

Memberships

- New Renewal
- Lifetime Membership - only \$1000
- Dual Membership(couples) - only \$85/year
- Individual - only \$50/year

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Ranch/Business Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____ Website _____

Mail To:

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

303/243-0900
www.buffaloranchers.com