

Bison, Brucellosis and Food Safety



Hazards in high profile stories

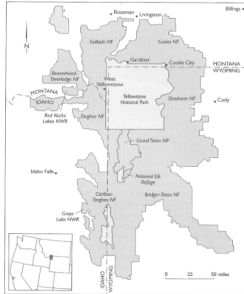
Food Safety Rules Can Have Unintended Consequences

In our zeal to be stringent, let's try not to be stupid

Stereotypes Obscure Opportunities

Dig Deeper, there's no telling what we'll find

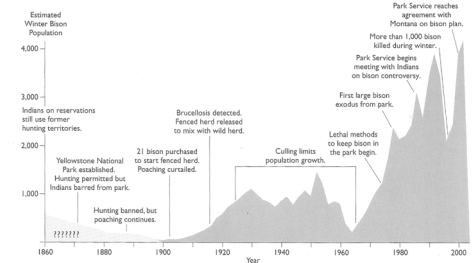
Greater Yellowstone Area



Greater Yellowstone Area. Federally managed land in the Greater Yellowstone Area includes two national parks (NP), two national wildlife refuges (NWR), and six national forests (NF).

History of Bison in Yellowstone

A brief history of bison in Yellowstone National Park



Wildlife counts in Yellowstone are always subject to error because of the unknown number of animals that may go undetected, but estimates made before 1900 were especially unreliable because they were often based on hunches and chance observations rather than a systematic survey.

Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Goals



- Maintain wild and free-ranging bison population
- Reduce risk of brucellosis transmission
- Manage bison that leave YMP and enter Montana
- Maintain Montana's brucellosis-free status

IBMP Complications



- Hard to control bison
- Hard to quantify risk
- Every year is different
- Bison not the full story

Elk



- Elk can be infected with and shed brucellosis
- Thousand of Elk migrate in and out of the Park
- Elk are an economic force in the Region
- Elk are even harder to control than bison

Elk Feedgrounds in Wyoming



Why are the Rules Archaic ?

- Made when brucellosis endemic in cattle
- Rules not designed for wildlife setting
- Depopulation of entire cattle herds
- Replacing herds into same risk conditions
- Whole states held hostage despite inappropriate epidemiological rationale

But the disease is still real

- Breakthroughs from Wildlife in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana in recent years
- Russia, Central Asia story since the breakup of the Soviet Union
- Mexico

Post-Soviet Russia

➤ Status - Russia

Across Russia, reported incidence rate in humans is 0.4 per 100,000, with 75% of cases from farm workers. These incidence rates probably underestimate the situation due to extensive curtailment of diagnostic surveillance in some remote areas.

Brucellosis is reported largely eradicated through the extensive use of REV-1, Strain 19, Strain 82, and Strain 75/79 vaccines, and replacement of individual infected animals.

Khazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan

➤ Status - Khazakhstan

In some areas, human brucellosis incidence rate approaches 50 per 100,000, or 150 times reported rates in Russia, and livestock brucellosis prevalence approaches 70%.

➤ Status - Kyrgyzstan

Human brucellosis incidence rate approaches 75 per 100,000, or ~250 times greater than Russia.

Tajikistan

➤ Status - Tajikistan

Infection rate in some districts in children less than 14 years is reported as epidemic at an incident rate of up to 12,000 per 100,000, or 36,000 times greater than Russia.

Prevalence in small ruminants and cattle is 15 - 20%. However, with prevalence amongst livestock at the village level approaches 70%.

Veterinary services are available only for approximately 10% of all livestock, and sheep and goats are vaccinated with REV-1 and cattle are vaccinated with Strain 82.

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 1

- “Ranchers Dislike wildlife advocates and vice-versa”;
- Some ranchers *are* wildlife advocates and vice-versa

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 2

- “Indeed, most ranchers hate wildlife, except those who make money off guided trophy hunts”;
- Even those who *do* hate wildlife are pragmatic observers of the financial and political power of wildlife lovers and hunters

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 3

- “If Montana cowboys are diehard traditionalists, Wyoming cowboys are even worse rednecks”;
- An extraordinary collection of progressive thinkers in all three GYA states make for fertile ground tri-state collaboration for change

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 4

- “Enviro think ranchers are going to go extinct and the sooner the better”;
- Many enviros don’t want ranchers to go extinct because it can be one good option for wildlife habitat protection

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 5

- “Bison can transmit brucellosis to cattle and therefore should never be allowed to roam”;
- Elk can transmit brucellosis to cattle and we will not stop them from roaming

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 6

- “APHIS rules are part of the federal bureaucracy and are therefore not up for discussion”;
- APHIS rules are part of the federal bureaucracy and are absolutely up for discussion

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 7

- “Ranchers and livestock vets think brucellosis can be eradicated in wildlife, but enviros and wildlife vets think that is a pipe dream”;
- Ranchers, scientists and enviros disagree on the feasibility of eradication, but can agree on the importance of risk reduction and management

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 8

- “State Vets are good ol’boys and will support ranchers and their bison hatred no matter what”;
- State Vets know both the warts and the strengths of their rancher constituency better than any enviro ever could, and are well-equipped, and now well motivated, to find practical paths out of this dilemma.

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 9

- “Ranchers exaggerate the food safety risk so they can scapegoat wildlife, whereas enviros trivialize the risk so they can scapegoat ranchers”;
- All the exaggerators are out to lunch; panic about ‘toxic’ wildlife is inane, but neither can we be cavalier about food safety issues.

Stereotypes vs. messy reality 10

- “New West landowners love wildlife more than cows and they can provide the necessary options for wildlife”;
- New West landowners usually do love wildlife, but sometimes in their ignorance they inadvertently disrupt natural movements of wildlife on the landscape and thereby help set us up for animal disease and human conflicts.

Opportunities Missed by Clinging to Stereotypes:

- Change Rules
- Reduce counterproductive Stigma
- Reformulate the problem as joint problem
- Collaborate on Management
- Find solutions that no side can execute alone

Elk

