

TAXPAYER SUBSIDIES FOR CATTLE PRODUCERS AND MONTANA FOR IMPLEMENTING STATE LAW GOVERNING MIGRATORY BISON AND NEW FEDERAL BRUCELLOSIS REGULATIONS

There has been no documented case of migratory bison infecting cattle with brucellosis in Montana, Idaho or Wyoming since brucellosis was first detected in bison in 1917.

All recent outbreaks of brucellosis in cattle in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming have been DNA traced to migratory elk, not bison (Beja-Pereira 2009).

Brucellosis was introduced to Yellowstone's migratory bison and elk populations by cattle (Meagher and Meyer 1994). Bison calves captured from the wild were "mothered with domestic bovine cows" and pastured with cattle that were brought into Yellowstone to feed Park workers and tourists. Elk were likely infected with brucellosis by cattle on state and federal "feed grounds" that unnaturally congregate wildlife.

In 1995, the Montana legislature adopted MCA 81-2-120 in response to political pressure by cattle ranchers to stop wild bison from migrating into Montana from Yellowstone National Park.

MCA 81-2-120 gives the Montana Department of Livestock jurisdiction over migratory bison and requires a governor approved plan that severely restricts available habitat for bison and subjects the native species to livestock management techniques. Migratory elk populations freely range Montana under Fish, Wildlife & Parks jurisdiction.

Part of the legislative justification for MCA 81-2-120 was the threat of sanctions against Montana cattle ranchers for violating federal brucellosis regulations.

MCA 81-2-120 guides Montana's participation in a governor approved bison management plan adopted after a complaint was filed and legal settlement was reached by the state with several federal agencies.

Adopted in 2000, the Interagency Bison Management Plan is estimated to cost American taxpayers over \$3,000,000 annually based on U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates.

The GAO reports the bison management plan is nearly completely paid for by American taxpayers with total U.S. Treasury expenditures of \$3,304,817 in 2006. To date, the plan has cost American taxpayers over \$30,000,000.

No current estimate of taxpayer costs is available from the agencies involved to operationally fund the Interagency Bison Management Plan through 2015, the time period studied for environmental impacts.

Montana's participation in the bison plan is nearly all paid for by American taxpayers through funding agreements that have been in place since before 2000 with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

In 2010, APHIS granted \$525,000 to the Montana Department of Livestock to fund its

role in the Interagency Bison Management Plan. From 2001 to 2010, nearly \$6,000,000 in American taxpayer funding was given to the livestock agency to enforce MCA 81-2-120.

Additionally, APHIS provides funding to the Montana Department of Livestock to implement new federal brucellosis regulations in Designated Surveillance Areas in portions of Beaverhead, Gallatin, Madison and Park counties in southwestern Montana.

The new rules remove the threat of whole herd cattle slaughter, loss of the state's brucellosis free status, and threat of state sanctions against Montana cattle that contract brucellosis.

The Designated Surveillance Areas (DSA) cost \$431,000 annually with about half the costs of managing cattle under the new rules paid for by Montana taxpayers.

Cattle producers within the DSA realize a net benefit of \$9.50-\$14.00 per head from testing cattle, and veterinarians are reimbursed for labor, lab fees, shipping and supplies. Montana calculated the new regulations provide an annual net benefit to cattle ranchers statewide of \$5.5 million to \$11.5 million.

All sources can be downloaded online at the web links provided here:

<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/legislative/taxpayerfunding.html>

<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/habitat/bisonconservation.html>

1. Beja-Pereira, Albano, Betsy Bricker, Shanyuan Chen, Claudia Almendra, P. J. White, and Gordon Luikart. 2009. DNA Genotyping Suggests that Recent Brucellosis Outbreaks in the Greater Yellowstone Area Originated from Elk. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 45(4): 1174-1177.
2. Meagher, Margaret M. 1973. *The Bison of Yellowstone National Park*. Scientific Monograph Series Number One. National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 161 pp.
3. Meagher, M. and Margaret E. Meyer. 1994. On the Origin of Brucellosis in Bison of Yellowstone National Park: A Review. *Conservation Biology* 8(3): 645-653.
4. Montana Dept. of Livestock, Bison Operations and GYIBC History of Expenditures FY 01 through FY 07.
5. Montana Dept. of Livestock and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture APHIS, Cooperative Funding Agreements FY 2008, FY 2009, FY 2010.
6. Montana Dept. of Livestock, PRELIMINARY EPIDEMIOLOGY REPORT MONTANA BRUCELOSIS, September 19, 2008.
7. Montana Dept. of Livestock, Designated Surveillance Area Economic Impact Statement, 2011. Online: www.liv.mt.gov/brucellosis/default.mcp
8. Montana Dept. of Livestock, Economic Analysis: MDOL's DSA Worth Millions to Cattle Producers, State, March 4, 2011. Online: <http://liv.mt.gov/news/2011/20110304.mcp>
9. U.S. Government Accountability Office, "YELLOWSTONE BISON, Interagency Plan and Agencies' Management Need Improvement to Better Address Bison-Cattle Brucellosis Controversy," March 7, 2008. Online: www.gao.gov/products/GAO-08-291.