

DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK



BRIAN SCHWEITZER, GOVERNOR

PO BOX 202001

STATE OF MONTANA

BOARD OF LIVESTOCK	(406) 444-7323
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HELENA, MONTANA 59620-2001

February 14, 2006

Dr. Paul Scigliabaglio DVM
Area Veterinarian In Charge
USDA/APHIS
208 North Montana Suite 101
Helena, Montana 59601

Re: Fourth Quarter Activity Report

Agreement # 05-9730-124-CA - Bison Operations

Dear Dr. Scigliabaglio:

Dr. Linfield has completed the fourth quarter activity report for our bison operations cooperative agreement for Federal Fiscal Year 2005. I have attached this report for your convenience.

Thank you,

George H. Harris
Administrator, Centralized Services Division
Montana Department of Livestock

C: Marc Bridges – Executive Officer
Dr. Tom Linfield
Janet Nick

Montana Department of Livestock
Bison Management Cooperative Agreement #05-9730-0124-CA
Report of FY2005
- 4th Quarter Activity-

BISON MANAGEMENT IN THE MONTANA GYA

OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ Maintain Montana's Brucellosis Class Free status.
- ❖ Reduce the risk of *Brucella abortus* transmission from YNP bison to livestock in Montana.
- ❖ Protect the economic interests and viability of Montana's livestock industry.
- ❖ Protect private property in Montana.
- ❖ Preserve a viable wild population of YNP bison.
- ❖ Cooperatively implement the Interagency Bison Management Plan with member agencies.
- ❖ Provide science-based, factual information to the public regarding brucellosis in the GYA.

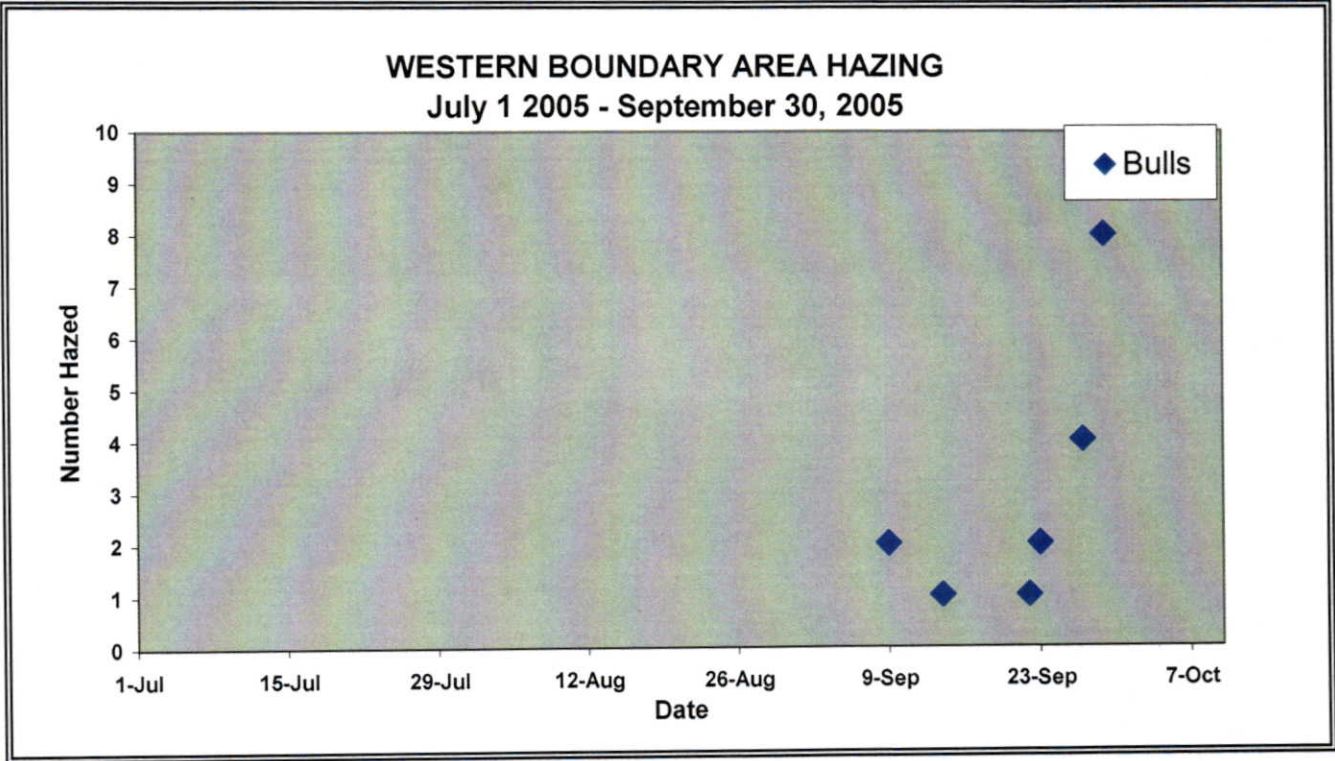
PROGRAM ACTIVITY:

During the 4th Quarter of FY2005, the Department of Livestock (MT DOL) continued to jointly implement the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) with National Park Service, US Forest Service, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Through implementation of the IBMP, the member agencies were successful in realizing the program objectives (above). Activities during the 4th Quarter of FY2005 included:

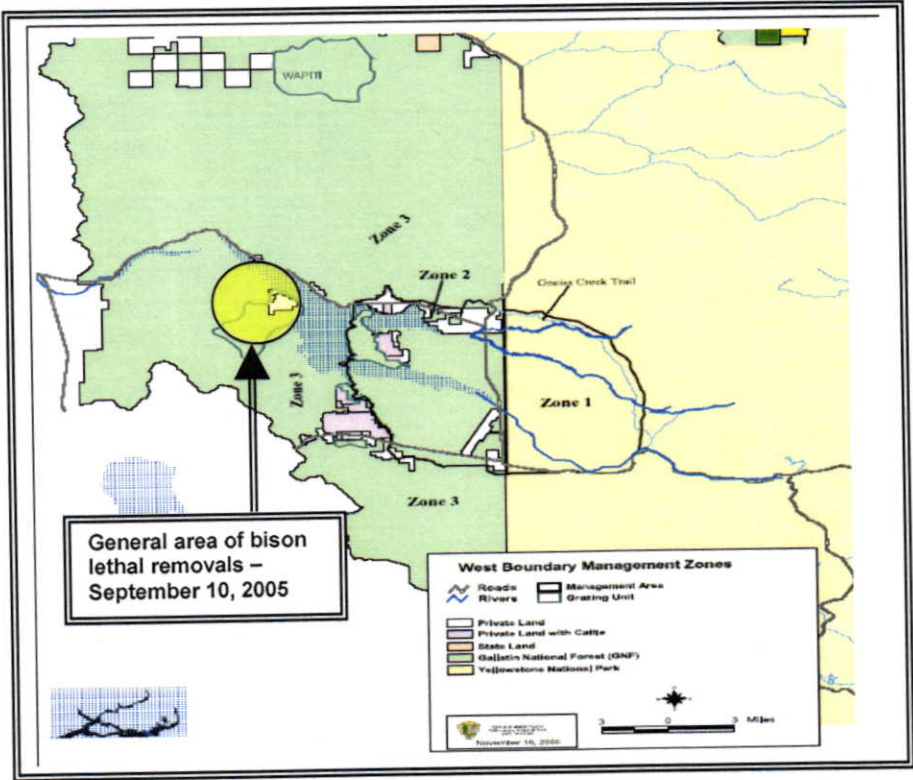
- ❖ **Bison Hazing.** Implementation of the IBMP continues to focus on spatial and temporal separation of bison and cattle outside YNP. Department personnel monitored the distribution and abundance of bison in the Montana Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA). Hazing operations were conducted on 6 different days in the Western Boundary Area. The tables below and the graphs on the following page summarize hazing activities conducted in the Western and Northern Boundary Areas of YNP, where the MT DOL was the lead agency regarding bison management activities.

Western Boundary Area Hazing	
July 1, 2005 - September 30, 2005	
# Hazing Operation Days	6
Total Bull Bison Hazed	18
Total Mixed Bison Hazed	0
Total Hazed- Successful	13
Total Not Successful	5
Total Bison Hazed	18

Northern Boundary Area Hazing	
July 1, 2005 - September 30, 2005	
# Hazing Operation Days	0
Total Bull Bison Hazed	0
Total Mixed Bison Hazed	0
Total Hazed- Successful	0
Total Not Successful	0
Total Bison Hazed	0



- ❖ **Bison Capture.** There were no bison capture operations conducted between July 1, 2005 and September 30, 2005.
- ❖ **Bison Lethal Removal.** Two bull bison, in Zone 3 in the Western Boundary Area, were lethally removed September 10, 2005.



- ❖ **Monitoring Sero-negative Pregnant Bison.** 21 sero-negative, pregnant bison cows were radio-collared and implanted with vaginal radio telemetry devices in order to conduct additional monitoring. The objectives of this study are to (i) monitor all sero-negative pregnant females to locate birth and/or abortion sites and (ii) sample birth and/or abortion sites for the presence of *B. abortus* that could become a source of transmission between bison and cattle in the Montana GYA. Any site that poses a threat may be disinfected to minimize the risk of disease transmission at the discretion of the state veterinarian. Field monitoring was initiated in April 2005 and continued until mid-June 2005. Surveillance efforts outside YNP yielded no evidence of any collared bison leaving YNP after the May 15th haze back date. Approximately 90% of the radio-collared animals were relocated within the Hayden Valley in YNP by mid-June 2005. There was no additional field activity from July 1, 2005 thru September 30, 2005.

- ❖ **Recording and Reporting of Management Activities.** MT DOL recorded and reported on all IBMP activities and management operations in the Western Boundary Area of YNP. Daily activity reports related to management activities are provided to IBMP member agencies following management activities. Similarly, the MT DOL communicated with the National Park Service (NPS) regarding bison management activities in the Northern Boundary Area of YNP, where the NPS is the lead agency within YNP. Additionally, the MT DOL provided media releases regarding IBMP activities.

- ❖ **IBMP Managers Meeting.** MT DOL personnel participated in IBMP Managers meeting on July 8, 2005. This meeting focused on the following:
 - Agency updates
 - Environmental persistence of *Brucella abortus* strain RB51 study
 - Fetal disappearance study
 - Proposed bison hunt
 - IBMP Status review report

- ❖ **IBMP Status Review.** Dr. Linfield participated in developing the IBMP Status Review Report 2000-2005. Developed adaptive management adjustments regarding bison management in the Western Boundary Area. These adjustments included utilizing hunting as an additional management tool. Dr. Linfield participated in an IBMP Managers conference call September 9, 2005 and in an IBMP Managers meeting September 12, 2005 to finalize the IBMP Status Review report. The report was released September 29, 2005, and included the following:
 - Goals of IBMP
 - Accomplishments
 - Adaptive management progress
 - Subsequent management actions, including those necessary to proceed to Step 2 in the Northern and Western Boundary Areas of YNP.

- ❖ Dr. Linfield, Dr. Ryan Clarke (USDA-APHIS-VS), and MT FWP personnel developed a questionnaire to survey livestock producers in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA). The purpose of the survey is to (1) gauge the risk of brucellosis transmission between wildlife and livestock in the Montana portion of the Greater Yellowstone Area; (2) determine the extent of interactions between wildlife and livestock; (3) livestock producer education; (4) compare risks and management alternatives with other GYA states (ID, WY).

- ❖ Dr. Linfield participated in several conference calls with a USAHA Special Committee on Brucellosis in the GYA. The Special Committee is planning a working symposium to focus on wildlife brucellosis vaccines, vaccine delivery systems, and diagnostics. Dr. Linfield initiated and developed a “Virtual Tour” of the GYA for the August 16 – 18, 2005 Working Symposium.