

Ranch Review: Beaver Valley Ranch

Roy and JoLynne Rohde—Chewelah, Washington

Feeding Buffalo —Jessica Wight Age 8

I am a buffalo feeder.
I feed buffalo.
The dangerous thing is getting off the truck.
Sometimes I get off the truck just for fun to trick the buffalo.
It's fun to play in the hay.
The buffalo like me and I like them.

The part fact, part fantasy story, written by a favorite second grade neighbor, typifies the interest and excitement generated in our neighborhood and among friends and family by our entrance into the bison business.

What began as a trial has escalated into an exciting project for us, as well as a subject of interest for many others.

Our land located at 2200 feet elevation near Chewelah, Washington in foot hill "cut-over" timber land that is not suited for farming, but produces good seasonal grass. The grazing

season is short, necessitating six to eight months of feeding depending on summer moisture.

We had previously summered feeder steers and were using a high tensile smooth wire electric fencing system for the cattle. This, with modification has proven to be satisfactory for the bison for a perimeter fence.

Our pasture rotation system was planned in conjunction with our local Soil Conservation District office. We found their expertness quite helpful in the original planning for our pasture seeding program and also helpful with some costs. Although the master plan we arrived at did not take into account the drought of the last two years, we have been able to continue to build our herd to seventeen cows that will calve this spring.

Beginning with five heifers and a yearling bull purchased in Montana, we soon were able to purchase three

bred cows, a mature bull and three calves closer to home in Idaho. This nucleus, along with eight bred cows leased from Stuart Bonney, Umatilla, Oregon, has allowed us to get into production sooner than would have been possible.

In 1988, we sold our first meat, and in January 1989, sold our first calves, with our heifer calves going to Oregon. Planning to market the bull calves for meat and prospective breeders, we held them back from sale.

By 1990, we will be at our phase one goal of 20 cows calving with maturing replacement heifers and enough meat animals available to meet our growing local demand.

As we are nearly 100 miles from the nearest USDA inspected meat plant, we presently sell our meat by the quarter or half, cut to order at our local plant. The meat is priced by the pound on the rail.

Our customers have been very extravagant with their praise about bison meat, nearly all calling to tell us how good it is.

This year we are beginning our phase two plan which consists of separating weanlings and feeders from the calving herd and bringing their nutritional level up with supplemental grain to emphasize faster frame growth and prevent the young bulls from stalling out during the rut. We anticipate being able to have these animals to butcher size at an earlier date.

Our feeding program for the breeding herd includes free choice minerals and salt with protein block added in the winter, along with all the grass-alfalfa hay they desire. We have been very satisfied with their condition. This along with a twice yearly worming program is proving to meet the needs of the animals. Injectable Ivermectin was used on the calves at weaning this year for the first time with good success.

"THE BUFFALO PRODUCER'S BIBLE"



"If you have a question about buffalo, chances are you will find the answer here."

"MUST reading for anyone interested in getting into the buffalo business."

"A superb 'how-to' book that tells you all you need to know on the subject."

Order your copy today.
BUFFALO MANAGEMENT & MARKETING shows you how to raise buffalo -- from A to Z.

Available only from the National Buffalo Association. Use order form in the back of the magazine.

Hard cover, 370 pages.
Copyright 1983, N. B. A.

\$19.95, plus \$3.00 shipping
(U.S.Funds)

Our cross fence plan has proven to be in need of revamping. We found that three wires were not adequate to keep the calves from crawling in our dry summer weather nor the cows from following.

This season's fencing job will be to put new pressure treated posts at 40 feet intervals and add another wire. We will also add a second charger that will electrify the cross fence system only.

In our area, we frequently have deep snow—two feet or more—and have had wet snow knock trees down on our perimeter high tensile fence. This wire bounces back and also holds up with the regular passage of the white tail deer in our area. We highly recommend a high tensile smooth-wire electrified system.

Our pasture rotation system is loosely based on the savory grazing method. The corrals are located in the hub of a circle with all pastures radiating from this hub. Each small (5-10 acre) grazing unit has a gate to the corral enabling the various pasture gates to be opened or closed as needed. Coming to a central area for water allows us to trap the herd for sorting when necessary.


We do find our corral system, built previous to beginning with bison, is not large enough and we will be adding two large holding areas soon. These will be made of high tensile field wire.

We have initiated two ideas that have successfully generated interest and business.

As we begin calving, we set a Sunday date and afternoon time for a "Baby Bison Viewing Day". Postcards are sent to people who have expressed an interest in seeing the calves while

small and previous customers. The herd is moved to a hillside pasture near our yard, where we can lean on the fence and talk bison.

We've had 20-30 people attend our past "Baby Bison Viewing Days". They



BEAVER VALLEY RANCH

Roy and JoLynne Rohde

509/935-8792

2174 Dry Creek Rd.
Chewelah, WA. 99109

Members Of
National and American
Buffalo Associations

enjoy asking questions, taking pictures and meeting each other. We serve coffee, punch and cookies from our farm shop, put lawn chairs out for people who may want "to set awhile". Eventually, we anticipate developing this event into a barbecue when we have enough meat available.

The second is to present each serious meat or breeding stock inquirer with an information packet about bison. This is tailored to the inquiry.

Those asking about meat only are given the National Buffalo Associa-

tion pamphlet "Buffalo—A Health Food You Can Sink Your Teeth Into" and a small cookbook, along with a letter of thanks for their inquiry stating our meat availability and prices.

For a breeding stock inquiry or one interested in beginning with bison we include the National Buffalo Association pamphlet "Why Raise Buffalo".

Meat purchasers get a more complete cookbook, another copy of the health food pamphlet and a personal note of thanks along with special emphasis on the cooking directions for the meat.

All future packets will include the National Buffalo Association pamphlet "Buffalo America's Oldest Inhabitants".


We feel these special efforts to educate can only build interest. With a smaller herd we need to emphasize and maximize our return in all ways available.

When the news first made its way around our neighborhood "the Rohdes are getting buffalo" there were some repercussions. Those same people are among our many visitors. They bring their families and friends to see the herd. Some are now our meat customers and as enthusiastic as we are. Several are willing helpers when we need an extra hand and it would be hard to manage without them.

We have met so many new friends and enjoyed afternoons and evenings of bison discussions with inquiring people, that it would be impossible for us to think of any other animal husbandry endeavor that can measure up to bison.

As Jessica said in her story "I like them. We hope they like us!"

Editor's note: Speaking with Roy on the phone recently, he informed me of a visit from the Air Force near Spokane to his ranch inquiring about bison meat and its' availability. Apparently, the armed forces have learned of the nutritional value of bison meat and are wanting to include it in their weekly menu planning.



1 year subscription-
18 issues for \$25.00

**Periodical for owners
of all exotic animals**

**P.O. Box 99
Prairie Creek, Indiana 47869
Phone
812-898-2701**

**ANIMAL
FINDERS'
GUIDE**

Pat Hactor, Publisher