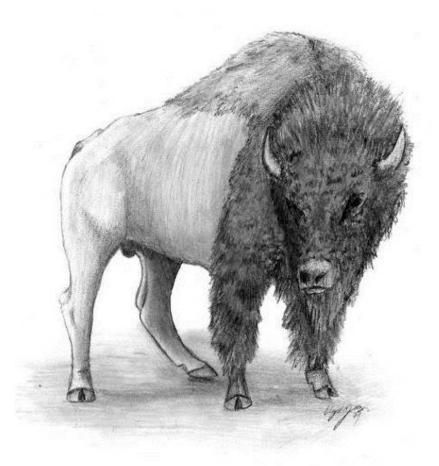
# Bison Hunter Packet Fall 2019





Congratulations on drawing one of the few bison permits available in North America on a wild free range public land bison herd. Hunting the House Rock herd can be very challenging and frustrating, yet also one of the most rewarding big game hunts in Arizona. These hunts may tax you mentally and physically, so be prepared. We've put this bison hunter packet together to pass along hunting tips that have been learned from past House Rock bison hunters, some legal requirements concerning your hunt and characteristics to look for to help you identify sex and age of bison. Our hope is the information contained in this packet will increase your hunting experience with this unique animal, increase your odds of being successful for this once in a life time harvest in Arizona and lastly, we hope it will maximize the time bison spend on the Kaibab National Forest where they will be available for hunters during all bison seasons. What you do prior to and during your hunt will not only have an impact on your hunt, but on other hunters during and after your hunt.

Arizona Game and Fish Dept. contact for House Rock bison hunts- Carl Lutch, 928-214-1242 or clutch@azgfd.gov

### **BISON HUNTING TIPS**

### Where to Hunt and What to Expect

The House Rock bison herd currently spends a majority of time on Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). They do roam off the Park though, where they are available to harvest. For all seasons, concentrate within two miles (and mostly less than ½ mile) of the GCNP and Kaibab National Forest (KNF) boundary. They will occasionally roam further north, but hunting further north without fresh bison activity will be unproductive. Also, driving forest roads in this core area will be counterproductive (see the next section). *Most effective technique used to harvest a bison is sitting water/salt locations close to the Park and forest boundary.* The closer to the Park boundary the more bison activity you will find. Often they will leave the Park for water and/or salt and return to the safety of the Park. The following sections, if they are followed, will aid in bison spending a greater amount of time on KNF and off the safety of GCNP.

### **Minimize Driving Near GCNP**

Extremely Important: The less vehicular traffic on the KNF within 3 miles of GCNP, the more likely bison will stay on the forest and not retreat to of GCNP, where they become unavailable not only to you, but those hunting after you. Minimizing your driving (including ATVs and UTVs) in this area, especially in the mornings and evenings is critical. Past hunts have shown, more vehicle disturbance in this area will push bison back to GCNP and less available for you to harvest. Consider walking or riding a bike instead of driving to where you want to hunt.

### Camp Away From the GCNP Boundary

Camping near the GCNP boundary with the associated camp noise will also increase disturbance to bison and as past hunts have shown cause bison to retreat to safety on GCNP.

### If Scouting Use Caution

Scouting prior to your hunt has the potential to increase herd disturbance and push bison back to GCNP. It is OK to scout and we encourage it to be familiar with the hunting locations, but be smart about it. There are some time between hunts for scouting. If scouting during an open bison hunt, please stay away from any locations with park vehicles, as that indicates likely an active hunter is currently there. Other hunters likely will be mad, if you disturb their hunt and rightly so. Scout cautiously as if you were hunting, to minimize disturbance to any bison off the Park. Also, watching the 2017 bison hunter clinic recordings, talking with past House Rock bison hunters, and using new mapping software and imaging are great ways to scout without making an actual trip to the Kaibab. Saves money and leave time too! Interestingly, on some aerial image maps you can see bison in some of the openings.

### Be Patient When a Herd Approaches and Remain Concealed after Taking a Shot

We cannot over emphasize this, it is very important for all bison hunters to follow. When a herd comes in be patient, they will usually be there for a while; you don't have to shoot right away. Take your time and make the first shot count! This will decrease wounding loss and increase the likelihood of putting your tag on a bison. After a shot is taken at bison, a typical herd response is to surround the wounded/down animal. It frequently does not make a difference if the weapon is a bow, rifle or muzzleloader. It is believed the smell of blood and the behavior of the wounded animal trigger this herd response. This typical response was used long ago by bison hunters to decimate bison in the 1800's. Bison don't necessarily equate the shot, blood and wounded/down animal as a bad thing. Sometimes they do, but usually not. Use this behavior for the benefit of other hunters. After shooting a bison, remain guiet and hidden and do not reveal yourself until the herd moves out of the area, leaving the harvested animal behind. Be patient; this may take a while. If you push the herd off the wounded animal and cause them to run off, the herd will typically retreat to safety in GCNP and you may lose a wounded animal that can still keep up with the herd. If they walk off on their own, they will likely be available for other hunters either during or following your hunt. You may also be able to get another opportunity to put down a wounded animal by remaining hidden or you may also be able to call other hunters into your location by radio to take additional bison. This practice has been used in the past to harvest up to five animals from the same herd.

### **Work Together with Other Bison Hunters**

Our hope is hunters will work together to increase everyone's hunt success. Contact information is encouraged to be shared with other hunters. Remembering the point that bison unlike other big game animals typically remain after a shot. As stated above, this behavior can increase hunt success for other hunters. Use this behavior to your advantage as it can lead to multiple animals being taken from the same herd at the same time. Sharing information with other hunters is encouraged following your hunt to increase the likelihood of another hunter's success after you.

### **Hunter Meeting**

The Department plans to again hold a hunter meeting the Thursday evening prior to each hunt (except the first Spring hunt) at the intersection of FR 270 at FR 223 (GPS coordinates N36 22.828, W112 08.628). We may or may not have a trailer at this location in 2019. We'll start at 6 PM and discuss hunt strategies, locations and etc.

### **Bison Herd Structure and Natural History**

Each bison social group consists of roughly 20-50 animals and are matriarchal, meaning the herd is led by a female. When the lead female is removed, she usually is replaced by one of her offspring or other relative. Again, this herd behavior was identified and used by the early bison hunters to decimate plains bison in the 1870-80's. Sometimes these social groups come together to form larger groups of over 100 animals. Even in these larger groups, the individual social groups stay together.

The rut typically runs from August through September. So, during this time, herd bulls will likely be with each social group. Outside of the rut, the older mature bulls will roam together or singularly, similar to the behavior observed in bull elk. Year round though, bulls younger than 4 or 5 years of age will remain with the social groups. For this reason, it is important to look at multiple sex identification characteristics rather than relying on any single characteristic.

### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

### What must be removed from the field after the harvest of a bison?

- 1. Arizona Revised Statues (ARS) 17-309A.5 states it is unlawful for a person to take a game bird, game mammal or game fish and knowingly permit edible portions to go to waste. What this means is <u>all</u> edible meat from a bison must be removed from the field. Organs (heart, liver, etc.) are not considered meat and can be left in the field.
- 2. ARS 17-309A.19 states it is unlawful for a person to possess or transport the carcass or parts of a carcass of any wildlife that cannot be identified to species and legality. What this means is that you must possess in the field the part(s) of a harvested bison so the carcass, meat or animal parts in your possession can be readily identified as coming from a bison; including any sex or age requirements. So, to be legal in the field a successful hunter must possess at a minimum a hind leg with the tag attached through the gambrel (R12-4-302). The tagged leg must be kept in your possession till you reach either your home or a meat processor. In addition, with the following permit designations, you must have the following at a minimum:
  - 1. **Bull bison only** permit- neither a yearling cow nor adult cow is legal and cannot be harvested during this hunt.
    - Proof of sex- the genitalia attached to a patch of hide
  - 2. **Cow bison only** permit- neither a yearling bull nor adult bull is legal and cannot be harvested during this hunt.
    - Proof of sex- the udder or genitalia attached to a patch of hide

### **Checkout Requirements**

There is a check out requirement (found in Commission Rule **R12-4-306**) on the House Rock bison herd. Each hunter issued a bison permit **shall check out** no more than three days after the end of the hunt, regardless of whether you are successful, unsuccessful or did not hunt. There is no physical checkout required. Call the Department's Flagstaff regional office at (928) 774-5045 to checkout or stop by the Jacob Lake Check deer

station during an open deer hunting season (junior deer seasons and early/late general deer season) or fill out the checkout form supplied during the hunter meeting and leave with Russ Jacoby. If you call in to checkout, call only the Flagstaff office, as other AGFD offices will not have bison checkout forms.

At the time of check-out, be prepared to provide all of the following information:

- a. Hunter's name
- b. Hunter's contact number
- c. Tag number
- d. Sex of bison taken
- e. Age of the bison taken: adult or yearling
- f. Number of days hunted, and
- g. Number of bison seen while hunting

### **Baiting**

Baiting with edible or ingestible substances is unlawful. Placing of bait like hay and grain to attract bison is illegal and those responsible for doing so will be cited. Following is the exact wording of Commission Rule R12-4-303A:

- a. An individual shall not use edible or ingestible substances to aid in taking big game. The use of edible or ingestible substances to aid in taking big game is unlawful when:
  - i. An individual places edible or ingestible substances for the purpose of attracting or taking game, or
  - ii. An individual knowingly takes big game with the aid of edible or ingestible substances placed for the purpose of attracting wildlife to a specific location.
  - iii. The aforementioned does not limit Department employees or Department agents in performing their official duties.

Placing salt produced for the livestock industry however, is legal to use and hunt over. There are already multiple salt "stations" in the main bison hunt areas near GCNP. These established salt locations are productive in harvesting bison.

### What if you wound an animal and it moves onto GCNP?

- Hunting is not permitted on GCNP
- However, individuals wishing to remove wildlife that has been legally shot outside of the park boundary and has subsequently died within the park boundary must contact Grand Canyon National Park Dispatch at 928-638-7805 and give the location of the animal in question. You also tell the Park entrance station attendant and they will call a Ranger for you
- The ranger needs to determine the animal was originally wounded outside the park and has in all ways been legally taken
- Once the determination is made, the ranger is authorized to release the animal to you
- Vehicle retrieval though is not allowed on GCNP
- These are guidelines and the investigating Park Ranger has the final say

### Motorized Big Game Retrieval of Legally Taken Bison

The Kaibab National Forest allows for the motorized big game retrieval of all legally taken bison with the exception of no motorized retrieval within any wilderness area. Retrieval is allowed within one mile of an open road and one trip (one vehicle) in and out. This includes the meadows along Highway 67. If it is wet or muddy though and driving off road will leave ruts, retrieval is not allowed as it will cause resource damage and you can be cited. As stated above, there is no motorized retrieval on GCNP. If a wounded animal dies on GCNP, you will have the pack it out (see above section for details).

### <u>Hunting Spots on Public Land are NOT Exclusively Reserved for Any Hunter</u>

From page 10 of the 2019-20 Arizona Hunting Regulations: ""First Come – First Served" is a common **courtesy** that should be used when more than one person wants to hunt the same area or waterhole, regardless of who has a tree stand or blind in the area. The Arizona Game and Fish Department reminds all hunters that confrontations in hunting situations can involve firearms and hot tempers. Whether you are in the city or next to a waterhole, any threats, intimidation, assault, or disorderly conduct can result in citations,

arrests and/or jail time. Please refrain from confrontational behavior - ethical hunting is everyone's business". This includes salt stations. We encourage all hunters to work together for an enjoyable hunt. There are enough hunting locations for all. Teaming up with other hunters on a single location is also encouraged, especially given bison herd behavior to stick around and surround a wounded animal.

### **Blood Collection:**

Although not a requirement, we are asking hunters' assistance in collecting blood from all harvested bison. This blood is sampled for Brucellosis, a disease that can cause abortions in bison, cattle and deer. It has never been detected in Arizona and we hope to keep Arizona free of it. We also test for Anaplasma cELISA and bovine diarrhea virus. Dip a small empty water bottle in a **clean** pool of blood. A quarter full is fine. Do not freeze the blood as it destroys it for the test. Write your name, date, hunt and permit number legibly on the water bottle. You can drop off any blood samples at the Flagstaff Game and Fish Office M-F 8-5 (3500 S. Lake Mary Rd) or leave it with Russ Jacoby and he will turn it in. Again, other AGFD offices won't know what to do with these samples, so please do not take them to any other AGFD office.

### **Non-Lead Ammo**

The North Kaibab is home to Arizona's only population of California Condors. Condors are endangered and are very susceptible to lead poison obtained from lead fragments in animal carcasses and gut piles. To reduce lead available to Condors in Condor range, the Department recommends using non-lead ammunition. The Department is offering a free box of non-lead ammunition (or bullets if you are a reloader) in the caliber of your choice, to all big game hunters on the North Kaibab. We ask each hunter to continue the long tradition North American sportsman have demonstrated over the years in wildlife conservation and do your part to help Condors. Using non-lead ammo is encouraged, but not mandatory. Further information can be obtained from Allen Zufelt, the Department's Condor Coordinator at (928) 214-1249.

### Please Report Any and All Hunting Violations Promptly to:



The sooner a violation is report, the greater the likelihood of apprehension. Also, if mistakes are made and multiple animals or the wrong animal is killed, please call the Operation Game Thief number to report the situation promptly. A game ranger will respond and assess the circumstances. Failure to report mistakes may result in full prosecution.

### <u>Maps</u>

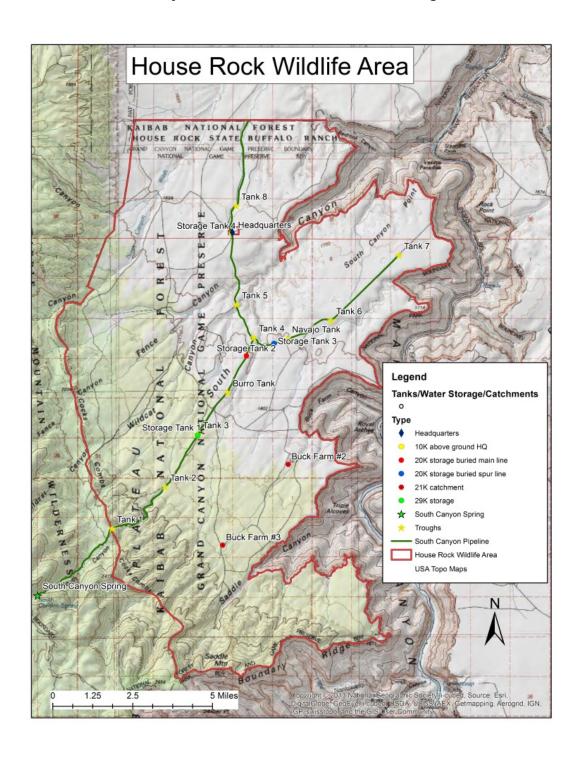
A free map program is available on the Arizona Game and Fish Dept. website. The direct link is <a href="http://www.azaccessmap.com">http://www.azaccessmap.com</a>. It can display maps in topo or aerial imagery. It also has layers available for Arizona Game & Fish maintained wildlife waters and other useful information. Another good map to have is the North Kaibab Ranger District-Kaibab National Forest "Motor Vehicle Use Map". These are available at the Kaibab National Forest offices and usually at the Flagstaff Game and Fish office M-F 8-5. These maps show all the open forest service roads by number along the Park/forest boundary.

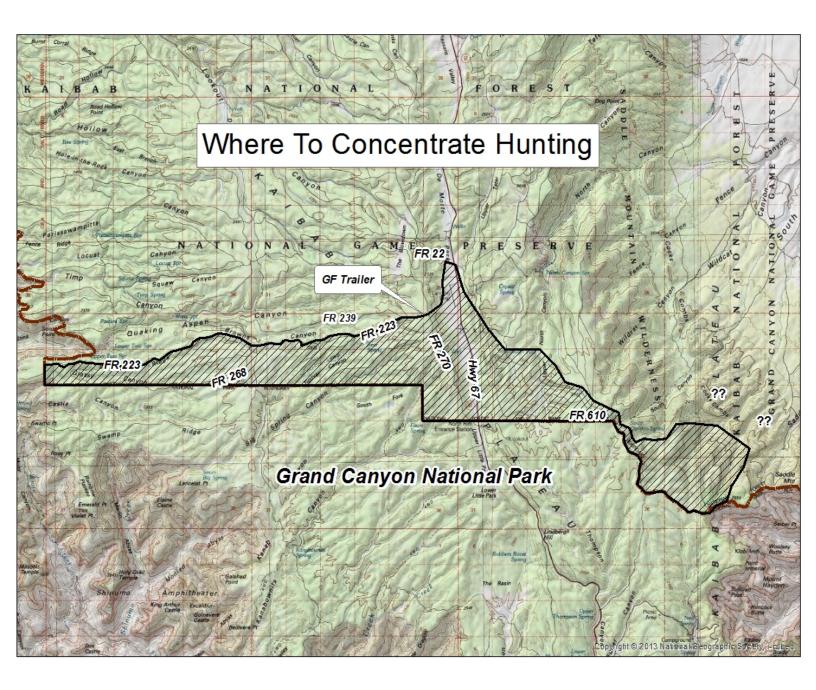
### **Closed Areas During your Bison Hunt**

From the Bison hunt section of the Fall 2019-20 Arizona Hunting Regulations there two closed areas during your bison hunt:

House Rock Wildlife Area (HRWA) is closed to hunting, as delineated in the "Open Areas" section, that the open areas are "12A (excluding House Rock Wildlife Area), 12B, and 13A (House Rock Herd)". This was done for two reasons: 1. to protect a small young bison herd (22) brought to HRWA in Dec 2017 and 2. allow any original House Rock bison that might move off Grand Canyon National Park once reduction actions begin there a place to move to. If any of the original bison move back to HRWA, controlled hunts would be held.

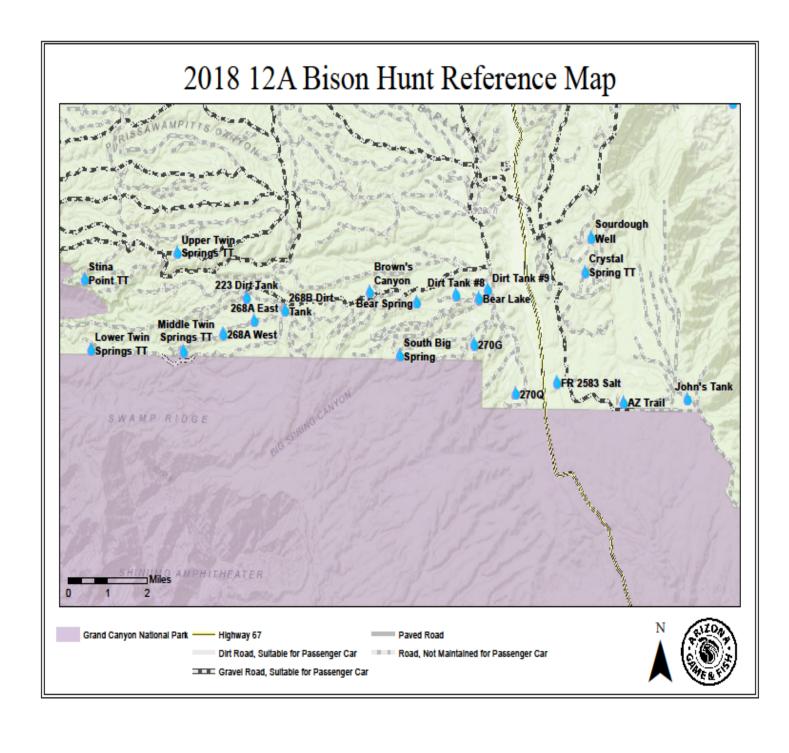
As stated in Note 4. The Grand Canyon National Park is closed to hunting.

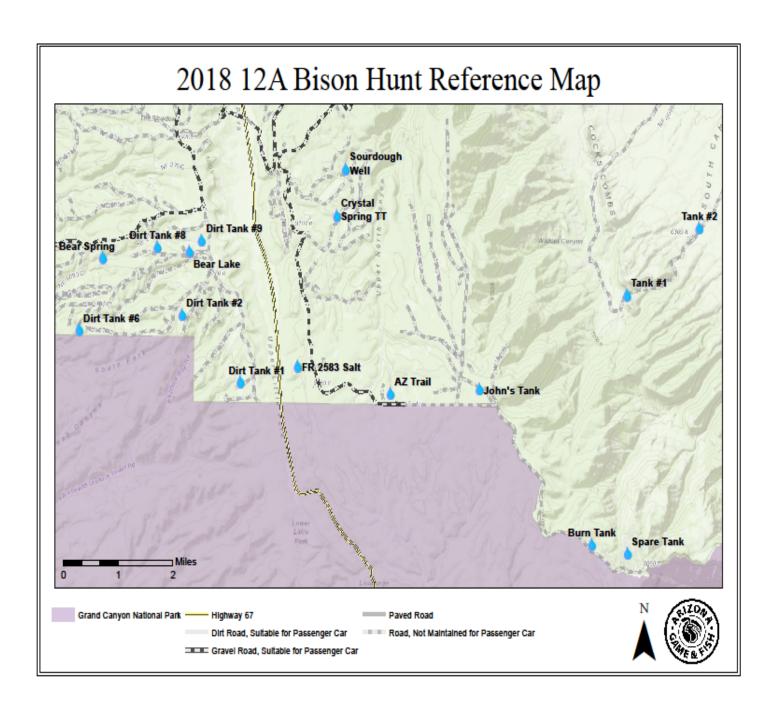




### **Forest Service Burning**

The US Forest Service may conduct controlled burns during any open bison season on the North Kaibab. All controlled burning actions go through an extensive planning process. Once approved, it may take several years for the precise "window" of optimal burning conditions to occur. Once the optimal conditions are available, the forest service typically moves quickly to implement burning activities before that burning window closes. It is impossible for the Department to know and coordinate with the forest service months in advance to any burn to not impact any particular hunt. For up to date information on planned burning, please contact the Kaibab National Forest directly.





### Kaibab Plateau Bison Water Locations

12A East Side Waters	Coordinates		AGFD Maintained Salt
Spare Tank	36°18.312	112°00.163	Yes
Burn Tank	36°18.429	112°00.869	Yes
John's Tank	36°20.483	112°03.102	Yes
AZ Trail	36°20.409	112°04.849	Yes
Sourdough Well	36°21.226	112°16.884	No
Crystal Spring TT	36°22.777	112°05.937	No
FR 2583 Salt	36°20.755	112°06.676	Yes

12A West Side Waters	Coor	dinates	AGFD Maintained Salt	
270Q	36°20.535	112°07.798	No	
270G	36°21.423	112°08.954	No	
Bear Lake	36°22.268	112°08.831	No	
Dirt Tank #9	36°22.426	112°08.592	No	
Dirt Tank #8	36°22.323	112°09.459	No	
Bear Spring	36°22.174	112°10.528	No	
South Big Spring	36°21.203	112°10.978	No	
Brown's Canyon	36°22.350	112°11.823	No	
268B Dirt Tank	36°21.992	112°14.126	No	
223 Dirt Tank	36°22.217	112°15.183	No	
268A East	36°21.800	112°14.966	No	
268A West	36°21.547	112°15.810	No	
Upper Twin Spring TT	36°23.018	112°17.082	Yes (AKA-Quaky TT)	
Middle Twin Spring TT	36°21.216	112°16.893	Yes (AKA-268A TT)	
Lower Twin Spring TT	36°21.219	112°19.419	Yes (AKA-268 TT)	
Stina Point TT	36°22.506	112°19.614	No	
Timp Point TT	36°23.106	112°20.536	No	
Locust Point TT	36°23.882	112°20.568	No	
FR 2897	36°21.502	112°17.939	No	
FR223U	36°22.057	112°13.419	No	
FR2694	36°22.100	112°13.410	No	

Map Datum- WGS 84; Format- Degrees Minutes Minutes

Hunt type	2016	2017	2018	2019
First Spring-Bull	73% (24-33)	76% (19-25)	84% (21-25)	8% (2-25)
1 <sup>st</sup> June-Bull	No hunt	50% (6-12)	73% (8-11)	42% (5-12)
2 <sup>nd</sup> June-Bull	No hunt	75% (9-12)	82% (9-11)	58% (7-12)
July-Bull	70% (7-10)	17% (2-12)	40% (4-10)	90% (9-10)
July/Aug-Cow	30% (3-10)	0% (0-12)	40% (4-10)	
Aug-Cow	No hunt	No hunt	11% (1-9)	
Archery-Cow	40% (8-20)	20% (2-10)	45% (4-9)	
Muzzleloader-Cow	20% (2-10)	40% (4-10)	30% (3-10)	
Sept/Oct-Cow	30% (3-10)	60% (6-10)	30% (3-10)	
Oct-Cow	30%(3-10)	60% (6-10)	40% (4-10)	
Nov/Dec-Cow	0% (0-10)	100% (5-5)	78% (7-9)	_

### AGE AND SEX IDENTIFICATION



Bull left, cow right. Notice the difference in horn thickness and the wooly face on the bull

Do not rely on a single identification characteristic when ageing or sexing bison. Instead, use multiple identifiers. The longer you are able to watch a particular bison the better your chances of gathering enough clues to properly determine sex and age. Be sure you have a clear unobstructed shot of the animal and ensure no other animals are behind it you don't see before shooting. Presented here are typical sex and age characteristics. As in any rule, there are exceptions. Some cows have individual characteristics usually seen on bulls and vice versa.

## Typical Sex and Age Characteristics in Bison

Penile sheath-missing	Penile sheath present	Penile sheath may not be visible	
Horns at base-thin	Horns at base heavy	Horn at base medium	
Horns curve inward the inward cur cream cones)	the inward curve (like ice goal posts)		
Head-narrow & thin	Head-broad, triangular dark & wooly	Head-intermediate	
Body smaller w/ less muscular	Body large, stocky and than adult bull	Body smaller less muscular muscle s	
Neck noticeable	Shoulder and head seem to merge, no neck	Neck noticeable	

Very important to remember there are exceptions to every characteristic, so use several characteristics to make your determination.



Foreground left to right: Cow, Calf, young cow, Cow. Notice the difference in horn curvature/ thickness; narrow face & lack of wooly appearance on face between cows in front and bulls in back.

### Cow identifiers:

- Absence of a penile sheath
- Horns thin at the base
- Horns curving inward (some bulls have highly curved horns too)
- Narrow face and neck (lacking the wooly appearance compared to bulls)





Cows- thin horns curve inward, no penile sheath, narrow face, lack of wooly appearance on head

### **Bull identifiers:**

- Penile sheath usually obvious
- Horns at base are heavy or thick
- Horns with little or no inward curve, typical shape like goal posts
- Wooly hair appearance on face
- Broad triangular looking head

Young bulls and cows are the most difficult to identify correctly, so look for all identifiers. Young bull's horns are beginning to curve upward, the horn base circumference is similar to that of older cows, but the tips usually don't swing inward toward each other.



Bull-Notice wooly face, thick neck, broad head and penile sheath and overall shape



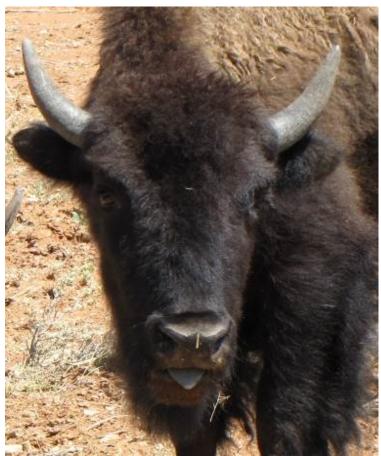
Young bull- wooly head, goal post horns, thicker at base & broader face



Mature cow- narrow face, horns point inward toward each other, thinner base of horn



Yearling Bull- Notice horn shape similar to a sideways ice cream cone, start of wooly appearance of head



Young Cow- Notice how thin the horns are at the bases & lack of wooly appearance

# YEARLING 2 YEARS



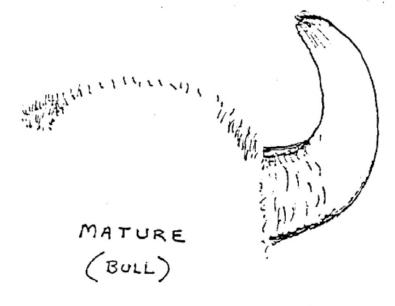
### HORN GROWTH IN THE BUFFALO

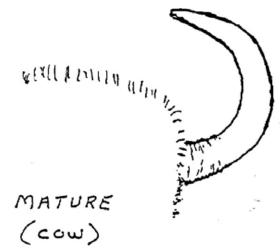
Both sexes of buffalo start their horn growth soon after birth and the horns continue to grow throughout the life span. These sketches indicate what you may expect to see in the different age groups. The horns are fairly straight through the first year and begin curving up and in as age progesses.

The horns of the bulls have a much larger base circumference than those of the cow with a general more massive appearance.

The cow's horns show less taper with a more constant circumference along the horn length. The cow will also show a sharper curve to the horn with some older cows making almost a half circle.

As the animals become older, the horns show a wrinkling and roughening near the horn base in a growth ring fashion. Old bulls horns will often be worn and split as a result of years of doing the things that a bull buffalo can do with these very effective tools.



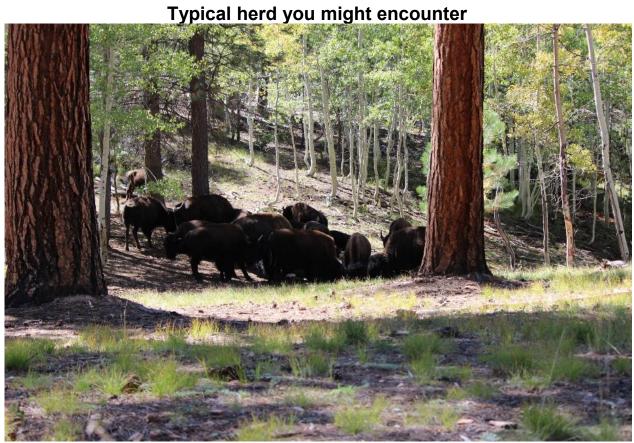


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# Sex? Mature or immature? Good Shot?



This is a mature cow, but notice the calf behind her- No shot



Be patient, wait for legal animal to clear and study identifiers on individual animals.

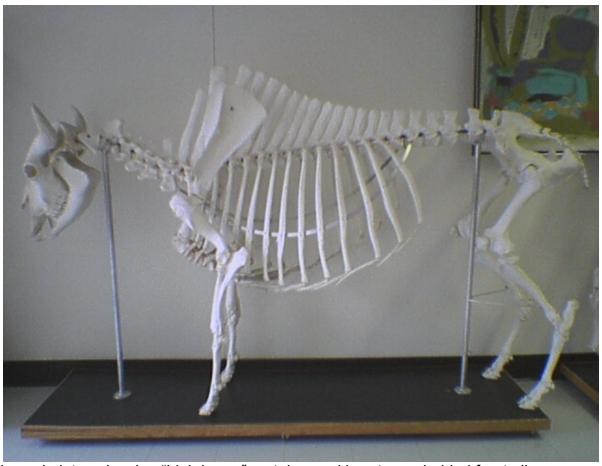
# **Shot Placement**

Best shot to quickly and humanely put a bison down is to hit it in the heart. Compared to other big game animals, the bison heart sits low in the chest. The "hump" takes up a large part of space between the top of the back and the top of the lungs. Best aim point is just behind the front elbow (within 1-3 inches), but it depends on the angle of the front leg (forward, neutral or backward) facing you and if the shot is uphill/downhill. When the front facing leg is forward, more of the vitals are exposed. Conversely, when the front facing leg is back, more of the vitals are shielded by the front shoulder/leg. If possible wait till the front leg is forward for better penetration and shock power to the heart/lungs area. To recap:

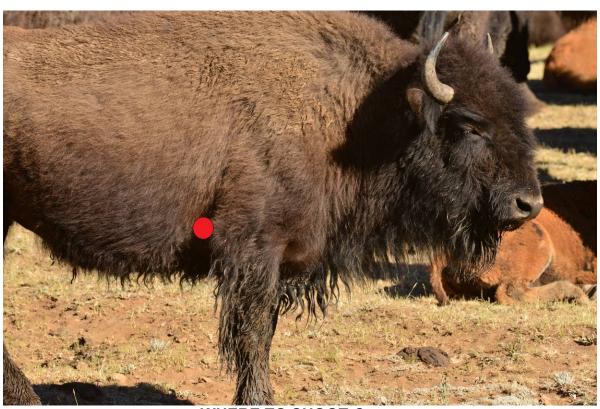
- The heart shot is best and will quickly put an animal down. A double lung shot is also lethal, but typically will not put a bison down as quickly, but still is a good shot. A poor hit will mean the difference between retrieving on the forest with a motor vehicle, cutting an animal up and packing it out of GCNP on your back or going home empty handed!
- The heart in a bison sits low in the chest and is about the size of a football. Aim for the point of the elbow (which might be hard to see due to all the hair) or another way to visualize it is 6-8" up from the bottom of the chest.
- If a wounded bison rejoins the herd, do not shoot again until you are absolutely sure which animal you hit. Then, shoot only when there is no chance of hitting another animal. There may be no visible blood from the hit or only a small amount visible.



WHERE TO SHOOT-Bull



Bison skeleton showing "high hump" vertebra and heart area behind front elbow.



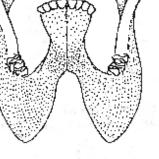
WHERE TO SHOOT-Cow

# BISON

B ison have the same number of teeth in the lower jaw as deer; 3 incisors, 1 incisor-like canine, 3 premolars, and 3 molars on each side. Bison can be aged by the emption of the 8 lower, incisor-like (incisiform) teeth  $(I_{12,5}C_1)$  until they are 5 years old. The small, decidoous incisiform teeth are replaced by large adult teeth from the middle  $(I_1)$  toward the sides  $(C_1)$ .

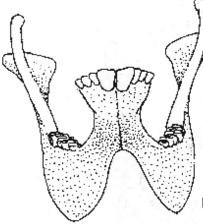
### 1 YEAR OLD

- All 8 lower incisiform teeth (\$\(\text{I}\_{1,23}\)\(\text{C}\_i\))
  deciduous (small).
- Only 5 molariform teeth erupted ( $P_{23,i}M_{i,j}$ ).



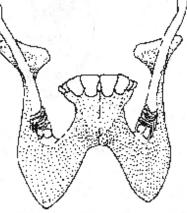
### 2 YEARS OLD

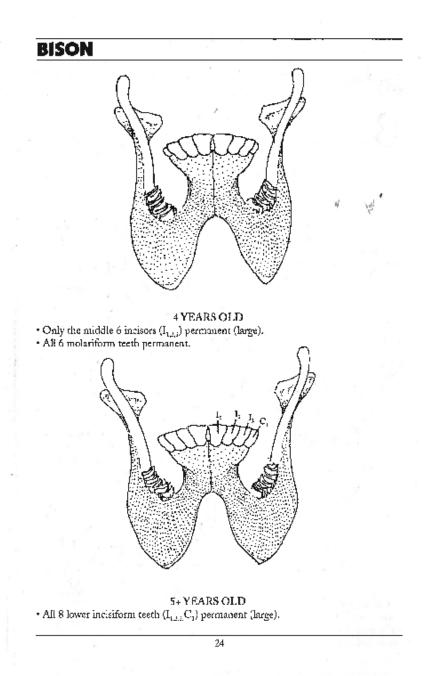
- Only the middle pair of incisors (I<sub>t</sub>) permanent (large).
- The second pair of incisors (I<sub>2</sub>) and the first premolar (P<sub>3</sub>) may be crupting but the second premolar (P<sub>3</sub>) will always be deciduous and well worn at this age.



### 3 YEARS OLD

- Only the middle 4 incisors (1, 1) permanent (large).
- The second premola: (P<sub>3</sub>) is permanent (very little wear).





To further sharpen and improve your bison age and sex identification please visit the following websites:

Wyoming Game and Fish Department- Bison identification and test page <a href="https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Hunting/Wild-Bison-Hunting-Information">https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Hunting/Wild-Bison-Hunting-Information</a>

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources- Bison Cow Hunt Orientation <a href="https://wildlife.utah.gov/pdf/bg/bison\_orientation.pdf">https://wildlife.utah.gov/pdf/bg/bison\_orientation.pdf</a>