

Bison ranchers look to expand customer connections at annual meeting

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National Bison Association

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Westminster, Colo. — The 400 ranchers bringing more than 100 head of live bison to Denver this week will also be bringing a commitment to continue building the market for bison meat based upon the quality of the meat and a dedication to sustainable ranching practices.

The ranchers will be gathering at the National Bison Association's 25th Anniversary conference at the Denver Renaissance Hotel, and at the association's Gold Trophy Show and Sale at the National Western Stock Show.

"The bison business is expanding its efforts to develop meaningful relationships with our customers based on the great taste, nutritional attributes and environmental benefits of bison meat," said Dave Carter, executive director of the Westminster, Colo.-based association. "During our conference, we will be focusing heavily on working with the public as partners in bison restoration."

Keynote presenters during the association's 25th annual conference include Laurie Demeritt, CEO of Hartman Group Consumer Research Firm, and Rob Bleifer, executive chef and vice president of culinary at Food Network.

"Laurie and Rob have valuable insights and expertise that will help us introduce more people to bison, which will help us continue to build our business," Carter said.

Other sessions during the conference will focus on animal management, herd health, marketing, and cooperative relationships with tribal producers and the Canadian bison business.

USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulation Greg Ibach is scheduled to address the group and discuss bison programs within that agency.

The annual conference kicked off at the Renaissance Hotel at 3801 Quebec St. with a luncheon on Wednesday (which the association has renamed as Bison Hump Day). Working sessions will unfold during the following two days, and the conference concludes with its 25th Anniversary banquet on Jan. 24.

On Jan. 25, activities move to the National Western Stock Show, where the live animal auction will begin at 10:30 a.m. in the Livestock Center sale arena. More than 100 head of live bison are expected to be auctioned.

At 10 a.m., prior to live animal sale, the carcass entries in the “market class” competition will be auctioned in the sale arena.

“The market class auction is a great opportunity for members of the public to come out and purchase meat to stock their freezers,” Carter said, adding that the association has an arrangement with Innovative Packing Co. near Greeley to cut and package the meat for anyone purchasing a carcass at the sale.