



December 19, 2025

Mr. Mitch Benson
11317 US Highway 26
Kinnear, WY 82516

Dear Mr. Benson,

Thank you for your October 16, 2025, correspondence regarding the bison incursions onto your deeded land on September 21 and October 1, 2025. It is understood that bison found later (October 10-13, 2025) were likely strays from the initial incident. I also appreciate the timeline detailing other 2023 incursions.

Following conversations with Director True of the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB) and Director Bruce of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), there appears to be a misunderstanding regarding the handling of this situation. Moving forward, please contact the Tribal Game and Fish Department if tribal bison are on your private, deeded property, and the WLSB if you need further assistance. The Joint Rule between WLSB and WGFD Chapter 41, Section 4 & Section 5 clarifies the responsibilities for each agency when addressing bison situations.

Regarding ownership, Director True did confirm that other local bison owners (both approximately 15-miles from your place) made no claims to the bison. Since no other claims were made, WSLB accepted the Wind River Tribal Buffalo Initiative's (Initiative) claim based on the information provided and under the authority granted to the WLSB in the Joint Rule between WLSB and WGFD Chapter 41, Section 4 & Section 5. Directors True and Bruce emphasized that even though the Tribes designate bison as wildlife within the Wind River Reservation upon leaving the Reservation boundary they become "livestock" under Wyoming Stat. § 23-1-102(a)(xvi). The WLSB District Supervisor did respond to the stray bison report, but has no legal authority to identify ownership of the animals.

Concerning brucellosis, it's important to note the entire state of Wyoming is considered brucellosis-free. Additionally, the Wind River Reservation is not in the Brucellosis Designated Surveillance Area (and thus do not require proof of vaccination until change of ownership). State Veterinarian Dr. Hassel assures me there are no unusual health risks to your cattle, as the bison did not enter your property during the period when transmission of brucellosis is likely to occur, generally January 15 through the end of June.

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I certainly understand your concern about stray animals on your land. As a cattle and ranch owner, I have much experience with animals breaching fences. I also know that Wyoming has long been a fence out state and that principle applies to bison as well. However, I understand the Initiative is taking efforts to fortify fences to standards being used by other bison owners in the state. However, I am actively working with tribal liaisons and state agency personnel to find solutions to prevent bison from straying, address the impact on landowners, and clarify relevant state statutory language.

I am committed to ongoing discussions with you and other landowners to resolve these issues.

Sincerely,



Mark Gordon
Governor

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