



# Prevention & Action Ideas

When the Bison are Out

Most people mistakenly think buffalo are dumb.  
Nothing could be further from the truth.  
They will more likely “buffalo” you before you can return the favor.

## Prevention:

- Be a good neighbor and put up fences to keep them in to start with.
- Unload trailered animals in daylight. Preferably into a secure, solid corral. Allow them to become accustomed to their surroundings prior to releasing into a pasture. A few hours more without water will not be harmful.
- Check and recheck every time you are in and out of a gate that it is closed securely. A unintentionally left open gate is possibly the primary cause of bison “escapes”. Avoid the habit of thinking you will just be a minute and will close it on your way out. Sure enough you get distracted and go out a different way.
- Prior to rotating pastures take a quick spin around the perimeter fence. Repair any problems prior to movement of animals.
- Consider locks on gates, particularly those that have public road access.
- If it is an all-male group (feeders) some have found it successful to keep an elderly cow (non-pregnant/cull) or two with them. It creates a herd like atmosphere. Some have also found the males do not pace the fence line with this setting.
- Plan ahead. Give thought and make arrangements in advance of ever having to contend with a call telling you “There are buffalo \_\_\_\_\_” (The blank would be anywhere but home)
- Learn which animals are the herd leaders. Knowing this will assist in getting their attention on where you want them to lead the others.
- Get to know who might help you before you are in the situation. People familiar with your bison are the best bet.
- Get animals to know positively some specific noise including something motorized. (Truck, tractor, ATV, skid steer, etc.). A familiar sound will often bring them home or at least settle them some. Something as simple as a chain rattling that they assimilate to being moved to a fresh pasture initiates their inherent curiosity.
- Be a good livestock caretaker and make certain your animals have sufficient space, nutrition and fresh water. If they have a good home they may visit the neighbors but will probably mosey back on their own where they know they have it good.
- Connect with neighbors and authorities requesting they contact you first in the unlikelihood that your bison have wandered away from home.

*when they do get out...*

over

# The Bison Are Out

What do you do? Well that depends. Each herd has its own personality. You will fare better if you have an action plan in place ahead of a situation.

## Considerations:

- Don't panic (*Okay, we realize that is easier said than done.*)
- Slow and easy. Patient mode is essential. Use their curiosity to your advantage.
- Avoid any strangers being involved. The best place for strangers is putting them where you do not want the animals to go. Make the path home non-threatening.
- They will stop sooner if not pursued. Let them calm down and stop before you start anything. Try and lead them back home. If they are accustomed to treats or feed use that to your advantage. Do not "drive" them. They will want to go back exactly where they came from so in this instance do not repair where they got out until the animals have returned.
- Limit your help to people who know buffalo. Do not attempt to "cowboy" them. Loud yelling, waving hats, strangers on horseback charging all sum up to disaster.
- Their pecking order will dictate who leads. Getting the leader(s) to go in the direction you want will bring the followers. Forcing those low "on the totem pole" to get in front of leaders will result in scattering creating a whole new set of challenges.
- Call the authorities (Sheriff, police...if they were not the ones who called you). Ask for their assistance in crowd control particularly if the episode has hit the media. You need to be focused on the animals. The authorities are skillful in keeping everyone else away and not necessarily beneficial to rounding up the animals.
- If they are far from home consider setting up temporary panels (the tallest you can find). Add good hay, place it upwind, and water. Stand back and get ready to close the gate when they enter. Then back up the livestock trailer to take them back home. Where they got out is repaired prior to unloading...right?
- The same plan that is successful today may not work tomorrow. They have very good memories. Handling equipment and corrals must be strong and manageable.
- Avoid moving them at night.  
Their night vision acuity is questionable.  
They easily get spooked in darkness.  
If you must move them at night have spotlights on the area ahead of them so they can see where they are going.
- **Horses:** Use only if both bison and horse are familiar with each other. Otherwise it is a guarantee that a bad situation will become worse.



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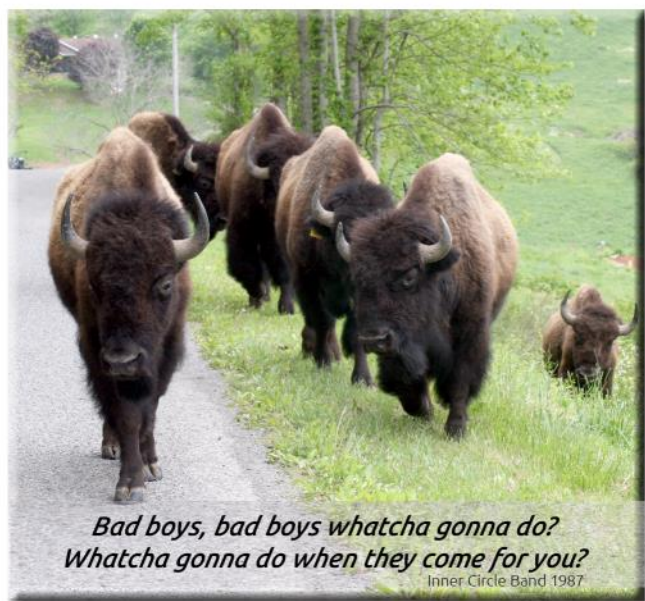


Photo by Bill Kincaid