



American Bison - *Bison bison*



Characteristics
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Behavior

Classification

Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Artiodactyla
Family: Bovidae
Genus: Bison



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Characteristics

The American bison is the largest land animal in North America. Males can stand six feet from hoof to shoulder and weigh between 1000-2000 pounds. Females are around five feet tall and weigh between 800-1000 pounds. The bison has long shaggy brown fur, a mane and beard under its chin and a long tail with a tuft of hair at the end. It has a big head with short black horns and a hump on its shoulders.



Range

The American bison once was found in most of Canada, the United States and parts of Mexico. Wild populations are now limited national parks and refuges. Bison can be found in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, National Bison Range in the Flathead Valley of Montana, the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Oklahoma, the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in northern Nebraska, Sullys Hill National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern North Dakota, Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge in central Iowa and the Wood Buffalo



Reproduction

Female bison are ready to mate when they are two to three years old. Males aren't ready to mate until they are about six. Mating season begins in July and can run through September. When mating season begins, male bison move into female groups and select a female. They then "tend" the female.



Males tend a female by staying between her and the rest of the herd. Tending can last for a few minutes or for several days. If a female isn't interested in a male, she will walk away. Males will threaten and sometimes attack other males that try to get too close to a female he is tending. Fights between males can involve headbutting, shoving, or locking horns.



The female gives birth to one calf after about nine months. She will go to an isolated area to give birth. Newborn bison are reddish brown and can stand shortly after birth. The mother and her calf will stay isolated from the herd.

