

American Bison

Bison bison

Description

The American bison is North America's largest land animal. While often referred to as buffalo, bison are not true buffalos. Male bison can stand six feet at the shoulder and weigh 1,000-2,000 pounds, while females are about five feet tall and weigh 800-1,000 pounds. They have long, shaggy brown fur, a mane, a beard, and a tufted tail. They have large heads with short horns and a shoulder hump made up of muscles which are used to control their massive heads, generally weighing 50-75 pounds.

Females mature at 2-3 years and males at about six years. Mating occurs from July to September. Mating begins when a male positions himself between female and the herd, with this behaviour lasting from minutes to several days. If uninterested, females walk away, and males may fight over access to mates. After a gestation of about nine months, females give birth to a single calf. By two months, the calf develops shoulder humps and horns, and is weaned by seven months but remains with its mother for a year.

FUN FACTS

- Bison can live up to 15-20 years.
- To remove snow from vegetation, they will use their head and hooves.
- Bison consume mostly grass and sagebrush, but also lichens, mosses and berries.
- Females and young males form groups up to 20 individuals. Adult males may form larger or smaller groups, or live alone.



If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at 403-214-1312, for tips, instructions and advice.