



InterTribal Buffalo Council
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September 14, 2023

Honorable Kay Granger, Chair
Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Andy Harris, Chairman
Honorable Sanford Bishop, Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, RD, FDA and Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Hageman Amendment #78

Dear Chairs Granger and Harris and Ranking Members DeLaura and Bishop,

The InterTribal Buffalo Council is a coalition of Indian tribes with the fundamental goal of reestablishing healthy buffalo populations on tribal lands. In doing so our members understand the reintroduction of the buffalo to reservations will help heal the spirit of both the Indian people and the buffalo. Herds of buffalo will also bring back an important food source, continue as a cultural icon to our people and create jobs. Now in our 31st year of operation, we started as a handful of tribes from seven states created as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and are now Federally chartered under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act and have grown to the point where we are now 82 Indian Tribes, Pueblos Alaska Native Villages whose lands are located across 21 states.

We are quite concerned by the proposal made by APHIS this past January that would require all cattle and bison to be fitted with electronic eartags if those animals cross state lines. While such a proposal may be effective and affordable for large scale cattle and bison producers, it is not going to work for the vast majority of our member tribes. First and foremost, our member tribes generally treat their buffalo as wildlife, not livestock. If and when they are transported across state lines, it is far more likely the transport will be to another reservation to help a tribe establish its herd and/or to strengthen the gene pool and add genetic diversity to the recipient buffalo herd. Most of our tribal members therefore do not have roundups, or the expensive hydraulic chutes that would be necessary to capture and install electronic eartags on a large-scale basis, nor do they possess the expensive electronic eartag readers. We also receive surplus buffalo from National Parks when those herds need to be thinned and those Parks do not necessarily have electronic eartags either.

When transporting our buffalo across state lines tribes do comply with all applicable state and federal laws governing the transport of buffalo to ensure disease mitigation efforts are followed.

Implementation of this rule will place a significant financial burden on small Tribal buffalo programs' management and labor when they are entering the market or simply participating in the cooperative intertribal buffalo exchanges, we have been operating successfully for years. It will also presumably place a financial burden on small tribal cattle programs. The rule should be amended to make the use of electronic eartags discretionary, not mandatory. That way if the large producers wish to utilize electronic eartags they may do so. Others should be allowed to use traditional eartags which have served the county well and allowed for more than adequate traceability. Since the proposed Rule does not now allow for the discretionary use of electronic eartags, we respectfully ask the Committee to adopt Representative Hageman's amendment with direction to the agency to amend the rule with the discretionary language and for it to then be reissued.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Troy Heinert', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Troy Heinert, Sicangu Lakota
ITBC Executive Director