

Buffalo brought back to Phillips County

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Phillips County again has buffalo as Paul Mailander's recent purchase of a bull and five heifers are the only buffalo in the county.

A casual conversation about eating healthier with his daughter nearly four years ago sparked the initial interest in purchasing buffalo. Buffalo meat is lean, low in cholesterol and contains a considerable amount of protein.

After talking with some friends who have had buffalo for years, Mailander decided to give it a shot.

"It has been very easy. They pretty much take care of themselves and are very adaptive to the weather," Mailander said.

They also calve on their own and require a lot less feed than cattle do.



Paul Mailander shows off his buffalo heifers, a mix of plains and woods bison. ☐ ☐

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—Enterprise photo

Although his first year with the bull, Buster, has been fairly easy, he did comment on the potential dangers of owning buffalo. Buffalo have never been domesticated and possess an aggressive side.

Friends made sure to relay the importance of being careful to Mailander. The best advice he received when dealing with buffalo was to always know where the bull is and always have an escape route planned in case the large animal decides to charge.

Once, when Mailander's son, Mark, was taking feed to Buster, the 2,000-pound bull managed to jump a 5-foot-6-inch fence and charge toward the feed wagon. Ultimately no one was hurt, and other than the scare, they have had no troubles with Buster.

Mailander said that he was initially greeted with laughter from his family when he brought up the idea of purchasing buffalo, but now everyone enjoys going out to see the small herd.

Breeding will begin in the summer with hopes of having calves by next March. At this point, Mailander plans to keep the bull and heifers to grow the herd but plans to raise the calves for their meat.

The buffalo will be released to the 100 acres of land Mailander set aside for them this summer. They will be grass-fed as opposed to corn-fed, which will take them longer to hit the ideal weight of between 1,200 and 2,000 pounds.

It will be nearly two years before the calves can be slaughtered for their meat, but each calf could yield 600 pounds of meat for Mailander and his family.

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Although Mailander, who has been farming for close to four decades, describes his work with buffalo as a side project that he hasn't really made any long-term plans for, he did state that selling the meat a few years down the road may be a possibility as buffalo meat is widely appreciated in Colorado and no one too close in proximity is selling it. Currently, he is just enjoying the beauty of the animal.



Paul Mailander recently purchased Buster, a 2,000-pound bull, at the National Western Stock Show. □ □

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Holyoke Enterprise February 21, 2013