

## Holyoke now home to rare white buffalo

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

---

Buffalo in Phillips County are relatively uncommon, but the presence of white buffalo is extremely rare.

Corey Koberstein recently added to his small herd of buffalo with the extraordinary animal in September. It is estimated that statistically, it is possible that only one out of every 10 million buffalo are born white. The buffalo, named Lola, was born with white pigment, not to be confused with albino buffalo.

Adding to the mystique of the rare pigmented animal is the fact that in Native American culture, white buffalo are considered sacred. Symbolizing hope and rebirth, the legend of white buffalo is often linked to the repopulation of buffalo in America after they were once considered endangered.

The white pigment in most white buffalo can be attributed to crossbreeding with cattle at some point in the past, giving buffalo the inherited white coloration from the cattle ancestry.



## Holyoke now home to rare white buffalo

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

---

**Lola, the white buffalo, stands back while Max and Ruby eat apple slices out of Corey Koberstein's hand. Koberstein is hoping to breed the rare white buffalo when she reaches maturity.**

**—Enterprise photo**

Finding white bison was no easy task. Koberstein said it took several phone calls and a lot of luck for him to get Lola. Having been claimed before she was born, Koberstein jumped at the opportunity to purchase the white buffalo when the original buyer backed out.

Once declared the winner of the genetic jackpot for buffalo, Koberstein set out driving on the 50-hour round trip to pick up the animal and bring her to Holyoke from Pennsylvania.

Owning a total of three buffalo, two brown and one white, Koberstein said he first became intrigued by the animal when he was younger.

"I've wanted buffalo since I was a little kid and saw them at the stock show," Koberstein explained. "I've always been into unusual pets and animals."

As to the reasoning for seeking out the white-furred bison, Koberstein stated, "First off, they are kind of cool-looking, unique and rare."

He added that by bringing in a white buffalo, he could potentially breed the animals for a much higher profit. Typically, white bison sell around five times the price of their brown counterpart.

"Most of the guys I have talked to that breed them said it's a 50-50 shot for the most part," Koberstein said of the chances of breeding a white calf.

## Holyoke now home to rare white buffalo

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

---

Aside from the profit possibilities, Koberstein said the meat was another driving force for initially purchasing the brown buffalo.

“That’s originally why we got the brown ones. We wanted to have our own meat and raise our own meat, especially bison meat since it’s a healthy form of red meat,” Koberstein said.

Koberstein has also made contact with a few hunting ranches on the Western Slope that have shown interest in purchasing some of the bull calves for buffalo hunts when they get older. It will be a few years before the buffalo reach maturity.

“These buffalo I have right now are almost like pets, but a dangerous pet, I guess,” Koberstein said. “I realize they are not necessarily the greatest pets but they are fun to have around and the kids enjoy them.”

Koberstein said that while he was warned that buffalo were dangerous animals and that he needed a fortress-type of pen to keep them from getting out, he has been surprised with how mild-mannered they have been so far.

Koberstein said the fact that he bottle-fed them may have contributed to their docile attitudes. Having purchased the two brown buffalo in June at just 2 months old for the female Ruby, and just a day after birth for the male Max, Koberstein has cared for them nearly since birth.

Lola was raised by her mother and purchased by Koberstein when she was near 4.5 months old.

The buffalo, especially Lola, are a hit with Koberstein’s three daughters, Ava, 6, Farrah, 3, and Genevieve, 2. He noted that they named all three buffalo, helped bottle feed the two brown ones and like to go to the pen and get licked by the extra-large family pets.

## **Holyoke now home to rare white buffalo**

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

---

With the buffalo getting bigger, Koberstein said he has had to have several conversations with the girls about the dangers of the animal, and that they are not allowed in the pen or near the buffalo without him.

Koberstein admitted that it will be a few years before he sees any return on his investment, but said he is happy to have gotten the chance as his interest in buffalo hasn't lessened since he first saw them as a child.

Holyoke Enterprise January 16, 2014