

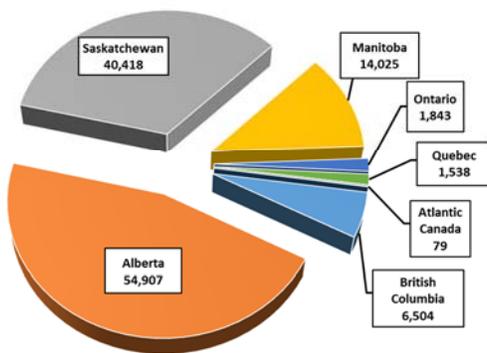


## Alberta's Bison Industry

The Alberta ranched bison industry has a supply chain of producers, finishers, federal and provincial licensed abattoirs, as well as wholesale and retail marketers.

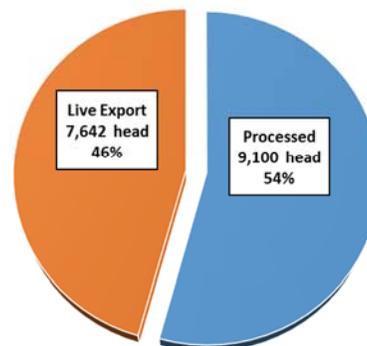
### Bison Production and Processing

Provincial Bison Population  
(Number of Head)



Source: Census of Agriculture 2016

Bison Processed in Alberta versus  
Live Exports from Alberta Ports



Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Agri-Food Trade Online 2016

On the producer side, more than 440 farms in Alberta produce bison and breeding stock. Bison are raised either on a cow/calf or backgrounding and finishing operation. Livestock can be market-ready either on the farm where they were born, or at commercial feedlots.

A year-round supply of high-quality bison is available for both provincial and federal processors, as well as for distributors of live animals to the United States. In 2016 over 9,000 head were processed in Alberta with about 90 percent being processed at the two federally inspected plants.

- Cow/calf operations range from fewer than 30 cows to over 500 in a herd.
- Bison are perfectly adapted to the climate of western Canada and can thrive on land that would be considered marginal for crops.
- Approximately 90 per cent of the bison processed through abattoirs in Alberta are fed a grain finishing diet, with the remaining being grass fed.
- Alberta's two federal processors are the only federal plants in the west. Canadian Premium Meats Inc. and Bouvry Exports Calgary Ltd. serve western Canada. Provincially licensed processors serve local bison producers.

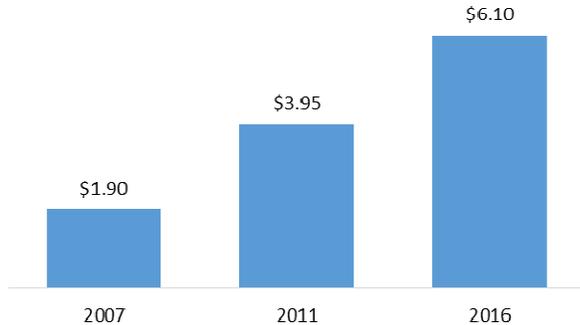
### Quick Facts

- ◆ Alberta bison is processed locally or shipped live to the United States.
- ◆ Alberta's herd is the largest in Canada, with most herds located in the central and northern regions.
- ◆ The sector is primarily focused on high quality meat derived from Plains and Wood Bison and crosses between them.
- ◆ A part of this industry focuses on breeding stock.
- ◆ Leather and hide products, as well as pet food are secondary products of this industry.
- ◆ The live bison exported out of Alberta for processing or feeding and processing in 2016 was estimated at over 10,000 head with a value of about \$40 million.

Link to [Abattoir map](#)



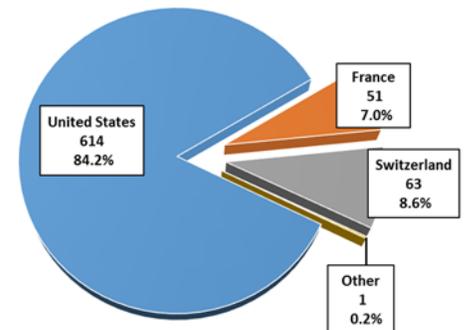
**Canadian Bison Carcass Price per Pound**  
(in nominal dollars)



Source: Canadian Bison Association Survey of Marketers

Canadian bison prices have been strengthened by the consumer trend towards healthy red meat sources. The average price in 2016 of \$6.10 per pound is 15 per cent higher than 2015 and 45 per cent higher than the five year average.

**Canadian Fresh Chilled Bison Meat Exports**  
(Tonnes & Percent of Exports)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016

### Market (Consumer) Channels

Provincially inspected bison is sold locally through the farm direct sales channel, local butchers or independent retail and food service outlets. Federally inspected bison products are sold in Alberta through branded products at the retail outlets. Companies and brands include Canadian Rangeland Bison and Elk Inc., Carmen Creek Gourmet Bison, Bouvry Exports Calgary Ltd., Noble Premium Bison, Canadian Premium Meats and Mountain Creek Bison.

In Canada, processed fresh and frozen bison meat is sold into chain retail markets and to high-end hotel and restaurant markets with distribution via Sysco and GFS. Bison producers note their product has no growth promotants, is low in fat, and high in iron and protein. Export to Europe provides another market for the premium cuts of this healthy, sustainable meat.

### Web Links

- [Bison Producers of Alberta](#)
- [Alberta Agriculture and Forestry](#)
- [Agricultural Processing Industry Directory](#)
- [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)
- [Canadian Bison Association](#)
- [National Bison Association](#)

For more information, contact:  
Alberta Ag-Info Centre  
Toll-free: 310-FARM (3276)

### Research and National Programs

Alberta has key research expertise and facilities in Lacombe and at the University of Alberta and Calgary that contribute new information for improved production, health, animal care, processing, meat quality and marketing. The Alberta Bison sector is linked to the national industry through shared standards in bison carcass grading, livestock traceability, and animal welfare set in the [Bison Code of Practice](#).

### Industry Opportunities

- Innovation and research to improve feeding efficiencies, health, and meat quality.
- Adoption of business and production models, technology and skills of people to improve competitiveness.
- Promotion of bison as a species with a remarkable ability to withstand a changing climate.
- Work towards increasing numbers in North America as part of the industry "[Bison 1 Million](#)" Campaign.

