

Fact Sheet



Managing Disease Risk in Alberta's Wood Bison

Introduction

Tuberculosis and brucellosis in free-ranging bison in and around Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta represent a health risk for domestic cattle and bison and disease-free wild bison. If these diseases spread to domestic livestock, international trade in beef and beef products will be impacted. Additionally, if these diseases spread to disease-free wild bison, the recovery of wood bison would be greatly hampered.

Increased risk of spread

Recently we have seen growing wood bison populations and more human activity in the north. As bison populations increase, the risk of contact with other herds that may be infected also increases. Additionally, with more human activity, including an increase in access routes, there is greater movement of wood bison.

Managing risk of spread

The Government of Alberta has prepared an approach for managing the risk to domestic livestock and free-ranging wood bison until a long-term solution can be applied to Wood Buffalo National Park. This approach is focused on the area to the west of the park, as these bison pose the most likely threat to transferring diseases to domestic livestock and the disease-free wild Hay-Zama bison herd west of High Level.

The approach has three components:

1. Hay-Zama Wood Bison Management

- I. Limit the number and distribution of bison in the Hay-Zama herd through a highly regulated hunting season to reduce the opportunity for exposure to diseased bison from the vicinity of Wood Bison National Park.

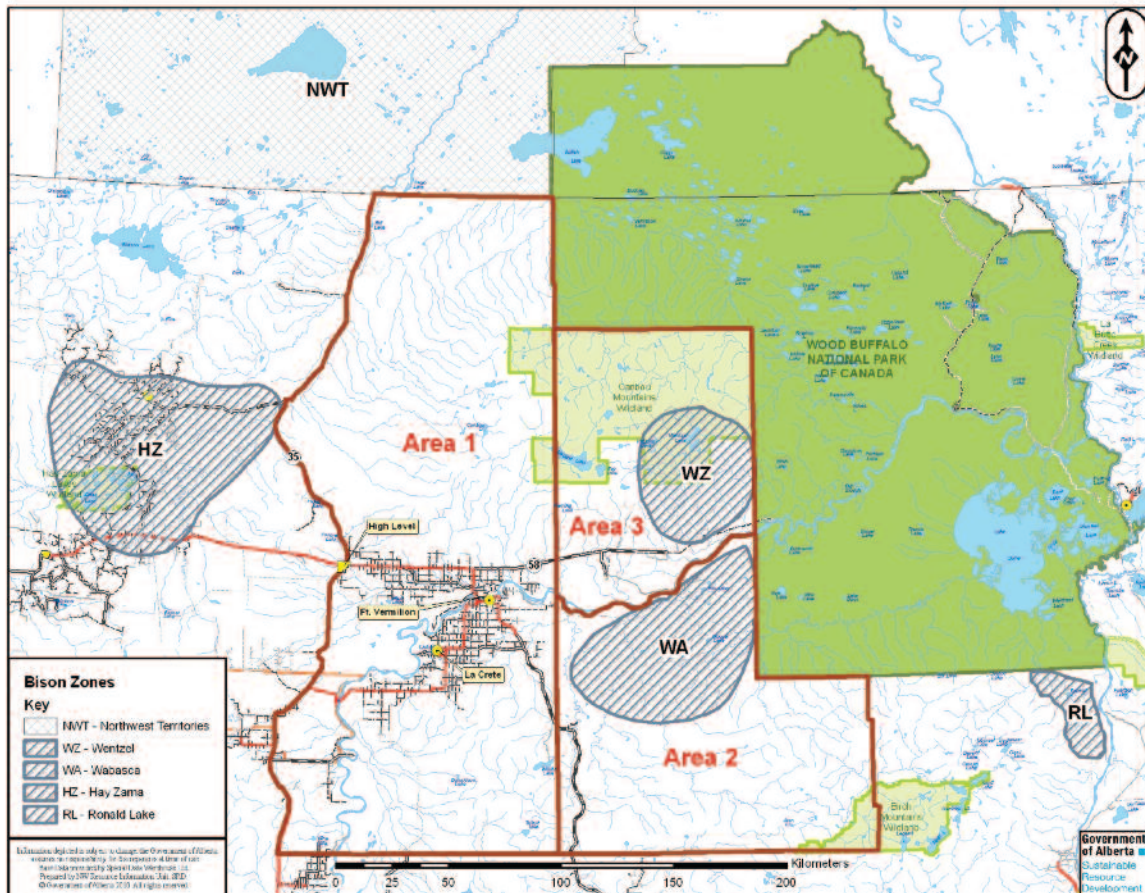
2. Managing Wood Bison Population East of Hwy 35

- I. Detect wild wood bison in the Agricultural Zone (private agriculture lands near Ft. Vermilion and La Crete) and the Hwy 35 Zone (10 km on both sides of Highway 35 from the High Level airport north to the Alberta-N.W.T. border) through aerial surveillance and public reporting.

- II. Remove all wild wood bison detected on private agricultural lands near Ft. Vermilion and La Crete and in the agricultural and Hwy 35 surveillance zones.

3. Wood Bison Population and Disease Monitoring east of Hwy 35

- I. Determine the numbers and distribution of wild wood bison in northern Alberta in areas surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park through targeted aerial surveillance. The survey zones have been delineated into three areas of probable bison occurrence (see Figure 1) with highest priority for Areas 2 and 3.
- II. Determine the disease status of wood bison in northern Alberta to the west and south-east of Wood Buffalo National Park through sampling suspect herds.



Local stakeholders and the public will be kept informed of the results through regular reporting, the Upper Hay Bison Public Advisory Committee and local public meetings. A copy of the report “Managing Disease Risk in Alberta’s Wood Bison with Special Focus on Bison to the West of Wood Buffalo National Park” is available at www.srd.alberta.ca and search for wood bison disease management.