4-27-2017

Mapping a Home Where the Buffalo Roam

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Bison, It’s what’s for Dinner.

The beef industry has increasingly become unsustainable, relying heavily on trucking and corn-based feed. Bison seems like a positive alternative due to labor, gestation, and carcass weight. This project explored the land usage, carrying capacity, and potential land barriers for large-scale bison farming in the Upper Midwest. The results found that almost 70% of the study area could switch to bison and maintain or increase productivity.

North and South Dakota showed the most potential while Nebraska showed the least. This could be due to the acreage-efficiency found in feedlots. The final conclusion is that land is not a barrier for this industry.

Data was collected from the National Agriculture Statistics Service, the US Department of Agriculture, and interviews. It was then manipulated by state in order to calculate acreage used by beef. This same acreage underwent another calculation to come up with a carrying capacity for bison. These then calculated farm productivity.