



Dear Citizen's Elk Committee Members,

Please find the following comments in support of your work to bring about better outcomes relative to brucellosis management, to help ensure that brucellosis mitigation helps both wildlife and livestock producers.

The Committee has succinctly identified the root causes of the issue, as well as highlighted some effective strategies relative to brucellosis management.

Targeted hazing, fencing and other methods have proven to be effective on small scales, yet do not achieve the desired issue of lowering seroprevalence rates in elk or bison. We urge the Committee to continue to support those methods as other, longer term solutions are sought.

Continuing to work with partners within the IBMP framework remains critical relative to ensuring all stakeholders in management regimes are at the table, working together. We strongly support this recommendation along with implementing local working groups to help identify new tactics and strategies relative to temporal and spatial separation, better funding sources for testing, quarantine and repopulation of herds as necessary, and to ensure better outcomes for livestock producers.

The DSA concept has seemingly worked well since implementation, and while we have seen some outbreaks and an expansion of the area, continued testing remains critical to ensure that the latest understanding of where the disease is, and how it is moving can be kept track of. This effort helps protect livestock producers across the state, while also recognizing the reality of the GYE's endemic source of the disease.

We also suggest looking at ways to improve public land habitat through the use of existing programs such as the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) which works to improve habitat through the removal of noxious weeds, as well as having FWP work with federal land managers relative to habitat improvement on public lands to deal with drought resiliency, weeds, forage quality and habitat security.

We also recommend that the agency look at how seasons are affecting elk distribution relative to private and public lands, and what role constant pressure from all hunt seasons is playing into this issue.

Furthermore, research relative to livestock vaccination needs to be increased in order to help producers find a better vaccine than the current regime, and we encourage the Department of Livestock to seek further funding to ensure that producers who are in the unfortunate situation of finding positive animals are not financially burdened by the disease.

Sincerely,

Marcus Strange

On Behalf of the Montana Citizen's Elk Management Coalition