

CALIFORNIA **GRASSFED** BISON®

Bringing them Home!



Annual visitors, a return of promise

We were at the ranch on New Years eve and while there, were able to witness the annual arrival of the migratory snow geese. Each year they come, but because we're not always there, we aren't able to always witness their arrival.

The last time was three years ago.

As before, everything stops. We watch in wonder as they fill the sky. They seem to circle endlessly. Again, we're unsure if they will land. Finally, and again, one by one they do.

As the last snow goose landed, loudly they took flight again. Disappointed, we thought they were leaving. To our delight, they instead circled over the pasture to signal to a new wave coming in that this was the place to land. Again they landed, the flock now double in size.

Amazingly, this happened a third time, with the third and final wave of geese arriving. For hours then, it seemed nothing could be heard in the constant din of their noise

As you can see, our bison were happily ruminating nearby, content to share their pasture with the annual visitors.

We smiled as we went about our chores, as always, happy to be there. And, as always, sad to leave after a few short days.

We pray that the New Year finds you and yours with the same sustainable sense of promise and hope in your hearts as we find in ours.



Lindner Bison and snow geese annual visit, January 2010.

**BISON - ancient symbol of abundance & prosperity.
Today's symbol of HOPE & RENEWAL**

Sincerely,
Kathy & Ken

the reconnect

FOR US, FOR THE ANIMALS & FOR THE EARTH

THE RECONNECT FACTOR *To forge and strengthen a new connection between people and their food. With each reconnect, we find we are part of a plan much grander than ever imagined.*

- for us



Sam E. Dog, Kathy & Ken Lindner, Heritage Ranch.

Honoring the Humanness of the Human

Much has been written about what it means to engage in and support ethical animal production. Specifically, Joel Salatin has defined the hallmarks of ethical meat production and coined the terms used. He talks about honoring the pigness of the pig, the chickenness of the chicken, etc. In our case, we honor the bisonness of the bison.

As meat eaters who share the planet with other carnivores, 2-legged, 4-legged and even no-legged, it is time to include our species in this wondrous cycle. It is time to honor the humanness of being human.

One advantage we have in selling directly to you, our customers, is that we notice what you buy, week to week, month to month. Your buying habits are not numeric data or scientific formulas funneled into or out of a commercial food production plan. This is part of our education and yours, and based on what we all consume.

I've never given much thought to what I eat beyond perhaps occasionally counting calories. I've been known to go on shameful Haagen Das binges, craving it perhaps as much as a drug addict would crave drugs. Also, I have consumed large quantities of diet Coke, a

shameful weakness, which I have yet to overcome. I'm proud of the progress I've made in my diet choices, but I am far from pure and that's ok for now.

Because of new awareness raised by Michael Pollan and his simplified approach to "eat food, not too much, mostly plants," and because of our desire to encourage sustainable, nose to tail eating, here's what we've come to believe and are happy to share.

Eating less meat is not only possible, it's practical, it's economical and it's sustainable on numerous levels.

Once I began paying attention to what my body craves, TV, newspaper and media ads are less enticing. I see them for what they are: a profit tool to encourage purchase by those less aware or in tune with their bodies. Instead of eating what's promoted and advertised, I prefer to eat what my body is telling me it needs. Not being a food scientist or nutritionist, I listen to my body and am the better for it. And in doing this small thing, I realized I'm doing what we are doing for our bison. I am honoring my humanness by giving my body the nutrition and energy it is designed to eat.

When it receives what it's designed to eat, I tend to eat less. A bonus is that what I do eat is efficiently used. Because it's efficiently used, here again, it's more practical, more economical, more sustainable. Without denying myself, I make better choices. In some cases, it may cost a little more, but because I get more, I am able to eat less. When I receive more nutritionally, I spend less on supplements, and food-like substances (long known as empty calories); trips to the store; restaurant fare and digestive energy.

What my particular human body requires may be different from what your body requires, so that's why it's good to develop our own sense of what our bodies are telling us.

In our house, for example, Ken has always preferred brussels sprouts, while I'll opt for broccoli every time. In hiking, his pace is that of a long distance runner, pacing himself. I am more of a sprinter, then my energy levels off to match his more deliberate, even tempo.

We honor our humanness by respecting these qualities in each other. They are gifts for a reason and serve us as the unique individuals we are. In menu planning, we take turns compromising so we don't end up with 16 course meals, and overall, we are content.

The patterns we see in your consumption choices are those we see in ourselves. In hot months, I may put a few strips of cubed steak on a huge green salad. Other times, our kitchen creations include ethically raised chicken and non-endangered fish.

As cooler months emerge, my body nutritional needs seem to shift, and, in my case, I can't seem to get enough red meat. Much like our bison, who begin

bulking up for winter, I do too. The same with our beloved 12-year old Scotty, Sam, and we notice similar, perhaps subconscious, shifts in your buying habits.

After a month or two of red meat eating, I transition to bone stocks, soups and stews. We notice that our bison bone stock is so nutritious, when we use it in place of water to cook barley, rice or vegetables, we are satisfied with smaller amounts beyond anything we would have ever believed possible. I particularly appreciate how easy it is for me to digest. This means I use less energy, which I can then readily apply to other activities.

Part of honoring the humanness of being human is to practice awareness and celebrate ethical food choices. When we practice sustainable eating, it means that what we eat is produced ethically and sustainably too.

For us, for the animals and for the earth.

A good and honorable cycle for a blessed New Year and beyond!

- for the animals

A few months back, a customer recounted that a friend of his bought some bison. He placed them on 800 acres with fencing normally used for cattle. To his dismay, they walked right through it and were gone.

The bison-less friend said to our customer, "They were so dumb, they didn't even know the fence was there."

Since my mom raised me to have manners, I refrained from saying, "It wasn't the bison who were dumb." Instead I assured him, "Oh, they knew where it was, alright. They always know where the fence is. They just didn't care."

I went on to explain it's important to give them everything they need, otherwise, like most intelligent creatures, they will leave and go looking for it.

We are often asked by prospective bison producers what kind of fence we use for our bison. It's an important question and before we reply, we preface it with, "Well, it depends on if you want them to get out or not."

It's true.

Bison are not cattle. This means trying to apply practices to bison which work with cattle to bison, doesn't seem to work very well.

Game fencing is what we use. It is for their safety and security that we chose this. The gates we use include special self-locking clasps so they can't be lifted up and off by livestock.

Usually.

BISON STORIES

This is just one of many stories we look forward to sharing with you. One by one, they light the way home.

Bison intelligence

by Kathy



"Are bison intelligent?"

This is a question we get, and asked more recently by Jim, one of our long time farmer's market customers. He had no way of knowing that we were in the process of writing about this as a bison story for the next newsletter.

It started with a phone call from Kat while we were driving back to southern California from the ranch.

"Hey, did you guys leave the gate open in the south pasture?" she asked Ken.

"I don't think so," Ken said. "Hold on, let me ask Kathy. Did you keep the gate to the south pasture open for any reason?" he asked. I shook my head. "She says no."

"I didn't think so. I'm pretty sure it was latched when I left yesterday, but maybe not. I'll make sure today. Cuz they're sure in there."

"Well, we don't want that," Ken said. "That pasture needs a rest. You'd better drain the south stock tank so they have to move back into the middle pasture for water. Then close the gate and make sure it's latched good."

"Right."

Hanging up, it seemed that one of us had forgotten to latch the gate. We had all been so busy, it was possible to have forgotten, but we are completely vigilant when it comes to our gates. There is no room for human error when it comes to the safety of our bison.

The outside gates are padlocked at all times and a few inside ones are padlocked as well. The one gate which we move the bison through has a short piece of chain attached to it with a hook-latch on the end. The hook

slips onto an industrial sized fence staple in the post, after which a ring drops down, making it impossible to accidentally lift up and unlock.



The latch the bison cow opened and lifted off the staple.

The following week, we received another call from Kat.

"You're not going to believe this," she said. "When I got here today, they were in that south pasture again."

"Well, that's strange," Ken said.

"That's what I say. Something funny's going on. I know I closed that gate before I left yesterday. But they're in there again this morning. The gate's wide open. I *know* I closed it," she repeated.

"Are the other gates locked?" Ken asked.

"Yup," she said. "And there's plenty of grass in the middle pasture. This is really beginning to bother me. No one else has been out here have they?"

"Nope," Ken said. "No one else has a key. Better drive around and check all the gates before you leave today."

"Oh, I will," she said. "This is so strange. It's the second time. And I *know* I latched it."

The following Monday we arrived late to the ranch. Kat, as always, was there to greet us. Cold water was waiting for Sam, and as we all unpacked the truck, she brought us up to date on equipment, pumping hours, repairs, and the animals.

"You'll never guess what," she said. "The bison have been opening that gate themselves."

"What?" we both exclaimed looking at her.

"I caught 'em in the act today. I kept seeing two cows over by that gate," she said. "So I just kept watching them. Sure enough, after a few minutes, the gate swung wide open and they just walked on through." She beamed, proud of her sleuth work.

"How in the world did they do it?" Ken asked.

"Darned if I know. But they've sure figured out how to get it open."

"Let's go take a look," he said. And with that, we all piled in the ranger and drove over to the south pasture gate.

"Ok, I see," said Ken looking at it. "They've somehow managed to work it with their tongue to open it. I wouldn't have believed it. In fact, our fence installer put on that special clasp, because it's easy to get on, but slips back into place so it can't be lifted off the hook."

"Well, they've obviously figured out a way," Kat repeated.

"Until we can replace it, just go ahead a padlock it. Before we leave, I'll drive into town and get a replacement."

Over the next few days, Ken replaced the clasp with a snap clasp, which latched to the huge fence post staple.

"I think they'll find that a little more difficult to lift off," he said determinedly before we left.

A few days later, Kat called.

"You're not going to believe this, but they're in there again."

"What?" Ken exclaimed. Then to my startled look, he said "Kat says they're in the south pasture again."

"How can that be?" I asked.

"They worked that big staple loose until it just fell out. I found it on the ground."

"Well those stinkers," Ken said. "Ok, that's it. Just go ahead and use the chain and padlock until we get back. I don't think they're going to figure out how to remove that!"



The staple the bison cow worked out of the post.

Eleven days later we were back at the ranch. This time Ken brought a steel loop, which he screwed into the post

where the staple had been. At the other end remained the snap clasp, which we tested and pulled all different ways.

"That should do it," he said.

"We'll see," Kat said.

Afternoon chores found the three of us in the middle pasture near where the bison were grazing.

"Look over there at that," Kat said, looking toward the gate with the new eye hook and clasp.

"That's the cow I was telling you about. She's trying to open that gate."

We looked over and, sure enough, there was one of our 8-year old cows. Beside her was a younger cow, patiently watching and waiting for the gate to open. The older cow had her tongue extended, and was working the latch, trying to either lift off the clasp, or loosen the new ring which Ken had screwed deeply into the post.

We returned to our chores. Twenty minutes later checked again and found they had given up and rejoined the rest of the herd peacefully grazing nearby.

"Well, I guess the new ring works," Kat said.

"What a relief," I said and Ken agreed.

The battle of wits with our bison had finally ended. Their health and safety were once again secure at Heritage Ranch.

- for the earth

Ranch Report

by Ken

The last quarter of 2009 was busy and eventful!

Organic Weeding 101

September found us hand-weeding Canadian thistle from a newly expanded section of hay pasture. As usual, when we begin a section of new grass, the weeds mistakenly think the water, being provided for the newly planted grass, is for them. Weed seeds are always in the ground everywhere, and simply wait for better conditions to emerge.

At first, they easily out-compete the new grass. Persistent, organic weed management takes several forms: cutting, mowing and/or digging them up. Then the sun can reach the new grass and helps it to eventually prevail.

By late summer, we had a bumper crop of Canadian thistle, some rapidly reaching 4 feet by mid-summer. This is largely because the grass growth tends to slow down as temperatures get warmer, and this is exactly what the weeds love!



Kathy leads the assault on thistle!

To prevent them from reseeding and/or being cut and baled with the winter hay, a full out attack was launched in the fall. Kathy led the attack, joined by Kat and me.

The result was several large piles of unwelcome thistle, cut, dug and hauled out of the hay pasture for burning.



Kat and Kathy removing thistle from the hay pasture.

Only humans who are passionately dedicated to humanely raising 100% grassfed meat without chemicals can appreciate the creative challenges and surprises Mother Nature tosses our way each year.



Leaving the earth with less chemicals is a feel good deal!

By belaying the instant gratification of traditional chemical assaults, and with deliberate, honest labor and the sweat of our brow, we experience steady, ethical progress each year. It is definitely a feel good deal.

THE BETTY!



Ken and The Betty scoop up hay left over for feeding.

Since buying the ranch, all work has been done without much equipment, and certainly without heavy equipment. This is partly due to our being beginners and having no equipment other than a pickup truck.

As new stewards of the earth, we like the absence of heavy equipment, and were able to tough it through the first several years. Yet because we are only two people who have 4 days/month to devote to badly needed ranch work, inevitably a better way had to be found. Kathy and I found that we simply could not sustain the level of physical demands, and we needed to leverage precious time and energy on either side of the 10 hr. drive to be able to work the ranch and sell at weekend farmers markets in southern California.

This year was the year. Lenny, who works for a local tractor dealer found the perfect used tractor for us. Two years old, with only 200 hours of use and stored in a barn, its condition is excellent. The implements included were also the most useful ones for our needs, so the configuration of the tractor was a perfect fit.

What made this possible for us was the generosity of my mother, Betty Lindner, who lives in Pennsylvania near my brother, Jim and his family. Almost 90 years old, she graciously and generously offered part of my inheritance early. She has been a staunch supporter of our grass fed bison efforts and wanted to help. It is because of her loving support and generosity that we were able to buy this tractor, which has aptly and affectionately been named "The Betty." We are forever grateful!



Betty Lindner will be 90 years old this year!

Almost immediately, The Betty was put to work gathering tumbleweed for burning. You may remember last year's tumbleweed "plow" which I made out of discarded plywood. It worked, but this year in one-half day, we were able to accomplish what took us two full days before. That is to say, clearing 1/4 mile of fence line of tumbleweed and burning all the piles. Words cannot begin to express how elated we are about our newfound efficiency as a result of having Betty on the ranch.



Ken plows tumbleweeds, which we later burn. It only took 1/2 day!

The Betty continues to be a big deal for us and we've just begun to discover ways of using her. For example, each year when feeding hay, there is always some that ends up on the ground, near the haystacks. Before, it took the better part of a day gathering up any loose hay by hand, loading it and getting it out to the pasture. With Betty's front end loader and a pickup truck nearby, we were able to accomplish this job in about 2 hours. What a difference!

The loose hay represented about 20 bales, or one ton of hay, a significant amount, not to be wasted. We see this is just the beginning and we're excited!



Lenny helps Ken set the first post for the tractor shed.

The auger accomplished this in about 5 minutes. (Kat and I couldn't help but compare this to when we built a salt box two years earlier, taking a solid 5 hours for two people to dig 4 post holes, about 3 feet deep!)

STORAGE SHED EXPANSION

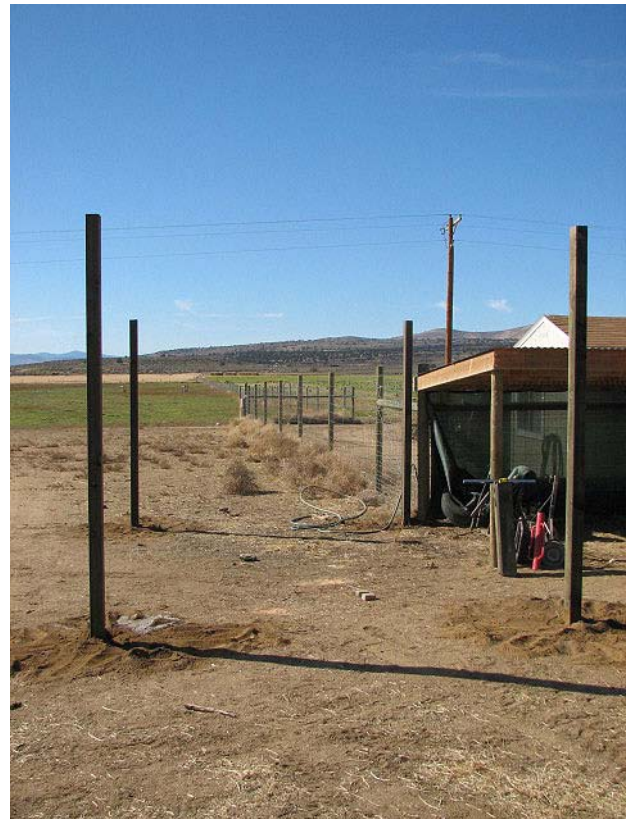
To protect The Betty from winter storms, we decided to build a shed. Since we have no barn or outbuildings, the shed needed to be large enough to hold the tractor itself and the implements (front end loader, brush hog mower, box scraper and earth auger.) This means the structure needed to be 20' long x 12' wide, with a minimum ceiling height of 8'. There was no time to lose. Materials were ordered October 5th and building began October 20th.

Attempting to build this large of a structure single-handedly is not an insignificant effort. Gratefully, Lenny was available for a day and since he has more experience with the tractor, he offered to help.



Lenny maneuvers a roofing beam into place for Ken

First, the tractor's earth auger was attached and used to drill four postholes for the corner legs of the shed.



The tractor's bucket easily lifted and held the 20-foot long side planks up 9 feet high between the upright posts, while I lag-bolted them into place. What an enormous help! (see photos next page)

Once the top frame of the shed was in place, I was able to finish the job. The effort was done in two stages.

The first trip, the frame, the second trip the roofing and sides were put up.



Lenny maneuvers a roofing beam into place for Ken.

During the whole time, gratefully the wind cooperated, making our handling of the 21 ft. long roofing pieces possible.



The first trip, the frame was put up.



Ken tightens cross wire to reinforce the strength of the frame.

For stiffness and to reinforce the frame, I installed smooth double wire stays across the two sides of the

structure most exposed to high winds, at 45 degrees, corner to corner.

The final step was accomplished two weeks later. We bought a 50' length of the type of shade cloth used for tennis court walls. We have found that this sports court material is very tough, will stand up to the high winds we often experience on the property and will keep most rain, snow, dust and wind out of the structure.

The cloth is 7' 8" wide, with grommets every foot along all sides and along the middle seam.



The cloth is attached to pieces of our game fencing left over from previous years and together, they form the walls of the shed.



The Betty, safe, snug and secure from weather.

Finishing the shed November 18 just before wind gusts of about 40 mph, Kat and I added t-posts along the side to better secure the lower edges of the fencing which held the cloth in place.

Little did we know that just two days later, a severe test would arrive.

GALE FORCE WINDS

The day after returning to southern California, an unexpected wind and snow squall blew through, delivering wind gusts up to 130 miles per hour at the ranch. Though we found out about it at the end of that day, words failed to describe the conditions, so Kat sent photos you see below. She was out in the storm for several hours securing valuable equipment, which had blown loose. Even Lenny gave a hand when he got off work. Both had to use eye goggles and handkerchiefs over their nose and mouths for protection.

Words cannot adequately express the appreciation we feel for their efforts in our reluctant absence.



The gale force winds piled up soil and other debris against the east fence, several feet deep in some spots,



The gale force winds left sand accumulated inside the bunkhouse, through closed windows. In fact, this sliding window would not open due to a track full of sand.

The storm moved 2 of our 3 staked-down wheel lines dozens of yards. They weren't damaged, but one was distorted to the point that it had to be disassembled to prevent damage. Everything considered, we are

fortunate not to have suffered extensive damage from this unexpected, severe storm. We are especially pleased that the tractor shed withstood this onslaught handily.

WINTER HAY PURCHASE

Early in November, we took delivery of 52.8 tons of wheat grass hay, to supplement our own hay production, for winter feeding. With our pastures still in weakened condition, we have been feeding hay through the summer and now into winter.

A good winter, with lots of moisture, could turn this situation around in a flash, but until then, the size of the herd requires us to supplement grazing with hay. As we always do in this situation, we found a grower who produces their hay in the same manner as we do, using no chemicals. At the current rate of consumption, we now have enough hay to feed through until early Spring.

FOR THE RECORD

Items you may find interesting.

Hollywood Farmer's Kitchen

Perhaps the first ever of its kind, the Hollywood Farmer's Market opened its long anticipated Farmer's Kitchen. Here, chefs and culinary students prepare dishes made from food produced by small California farmers and ranchers. Lindner Bison is proud to make our 100% grassfed burger for their use and as part of their educational and ethical outreach to children to teach

them where food comes from.

<http://www.hollywoodfarmerskitchen.org/>

Grassfed Bison Tallow Soap

As many of you already know, our popular grassfed bison tallow soap is available again. What you may not know, is that the soap makers are also authors. Their newest book, *Essentially Soap: The Elegant Art of Handmade Soap Making* will be released in July 2010 and available online. We're excited to report that it also contains an instructional DVD and includes a section on using 100% grassfed bison tallow in soap making!

Robert and Katie McDaniel are positively delightful to work with and many of you tell us their soap is the best yet!

Lindner Bison wool for Alison Pebworth art

An idealistic and unique young vegetarian artist in San Francisco contacted us this fall. As a result of her passion, Lindner Bison donated 8 lbs. of our bison's wool, which we collect and wash every year. It will be used in art created for her upcoming *America, Beautiful Possibility Tour*. The tour starts in March 2010 and crosses the country over a two-year period, ending on the east coast in 2011.

For us, one of America's Beautiful Possibilities is restoring 100% grassfed bison to the state of California, as well as to the many other states where they were once native.

We wish Alison much success in her journey and adventure!

Kat's upcoming visit!



As many of you know, by now, we expected to be living at the ranch. Unfortunately, Wall Street and the banking community have put those plans on indefinite hold, so we're bringing a part of the ranch here.

The first quarter of 2010, we've invited Kat to join us for a weekend at the farmer's markets. This gives her a chance to make the connection between what she and we are doing up there, what we're doing here, and how much you, our customers appreciate our efforts.

Each week, you make it clear to us that you really do appreciate our efforts at the ranch and here.

For Ken and I do continue to drive back and forth like crazy people, and to work sustainably and ethically at the ranch, without your support, we simply could not have made it this far. Because of your caring, we are able to pay the bills and push ourselves to keep going.

Also without an ag background, from Kat's perspective, she may sometimes hear from well meaning friends, "What? You're going out in this weather? You're crazy!"

This may be how we, too were first regarded by friends and family. It perhaps best reflects a newcomer's 'right of passage' from more traditional jobs or out of corporate American into sustainable agriculture. In our case, grassfed bison ranching requires distancing ourselves from the way things have been and still are in many areas. It evokes a new level of commitment.

We do work harder, perhaps because we care harder. For those who may feel threatened and/or still don't understand, we educate harder and we teach at every opportunity.

It is a privilege and honor to find ourselves part of this caring, sustainable cycle. You tell us that you seek us out because of what we're doing. The fact that each

year more of you want to join us tells us we're on the right track. This is wonderful. We welcome you all!

Potential Grassfed Bison Producer Applications

It is important to note that for those who want to learn about humane, grassfed bison production from Lindner Bison, the beginning focus is always at the farmer's market level.

This is because we believe that unless there is a demand for the meat, there is no reason to raise the animals. In creating a demand for the meat, we insure the survival of the species as they are much too big to keep as pets.

Or as one of our beloved customers put it so well, "We're all here to serve, and that includes the animals."

Working vacations

Working vacation applications are due by March 1 and may be awarded throughout the year to qualified applicants. Email us at kilindner@lindnerbison.com.

Bison Absentee Owner Applications

We accept these applications year round as well. They are awarded on a limited basis to those who want to humanely produce bison as grassfed meat animals within the state of California.

About our snow geese visitors

Snow Geese breed in the Arctic Tundra and winter in farmlands, lakes and coastal areas in the American south, southwest and east coast. These attractive geese occur only in North America, and make an annual round trip of over 5,000 miles, reaching speeds of 50 mph or more. Seen in flight, adults are white with jet black wing tips. They, like our bison, are described as gregarious. <http://www.wbu.com/chipperwoods/photos/geese.htm>

California Grassfed Bison, Bringing Them Home! is a quarterly newsletter put out by Kathy & Ken Lindner on a not so quarterly basis. In between newsletters, we can be found selling to our wonderful customers at the farmers markets, shipping to our wonderful customers, at the ranch seeding, weeding, feeding, or enroute between Heritage Ranch & LA.



It is our passion, our privilege to help strengthen the reconnect between you and your food by sharing our ongoing journey of producing 100% grassfed bison meat & helping to restore a native heritage animal to California.

We thank you so much for your support! *Kathy & Ken Lindner*

All photographs by Ken Lindner, Jr. unless otherwise noted.