



Ministry of  
Agriculture

# **BC GAME FARM GUIDELINES: BISON 2015**

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Livestock Health Management and Regulatory Unit

Ministry of Agriculture

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## PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

- To review legislative obligations related to game farming in BC.
- To provide prospective game farmers with practical information regarding game farming in BC.
- To provide links to resource sites and organizations.

***This document is not a legal authority, and should not be used as a substitute for the Animal Health Act and Game Farm Regulation.***

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Bison can be farmed in BC. To farm game in British Columbia a person must have a valid Game Farm Licence.

Game “ranching”, which is the raising of game animals on open, unfenced range areas, is not allowed in British Columbia.

## MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE LEGISLATION

[Animal Health Act](#) sets out the licensing framework including administrative actions that can be taken with respect to licensees and penalties for non-compliance. The Game Farm regulation is one of a number of regulations under the *Animal Health Act*.

[Game Farm Regulation](#) contains the Provincial Government's requirements regarding game farming in British Columbia. It is very important that all licensees understand the requirements in the regulation. Responsibility for complying with the Regulation rests with the licensee.

## OTHER LEGISLATION THAT AFFECTS GAME FARMING IN BC

### ***Provincial***

- [Livestock Identification Act](#) and [Livestock Identification Regulation](#)
- [Livestock Act](#)
- [Food Safety Act](#) and [Meat Inspection Regulation](#)
- [Environmental Management Act](#) and [Agricultural Waste Control Regulation](#)
- [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act](#)

### ***Federal***

- [Health of Animals Act](#) and [Health of Animals Regulations](#)

### ***Resources***

- [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#)
- [CFIA Regional Offices](#)
- [Codes of Practice – National Farm Animal Care Council](#)
- [British Columbia Bison Association](#)
- [Canadian Bison Association](#)

## LICENSING

### ***Eligibility***

To be eligible to apply for a Game Farm Licence, a person must:

- Be an adult resident (19 years or older) of British Columbia, or a corporation registered in British Columbia; and
- Own or have a leasehold interest in privately owned land on which the game farm is constructed.

### ***Prior to Applying for a Game Farm Licence***

Prior to applying for a game farming licence, an eligible applicant must do the following:

- Obtain a proper legal description of the property intended to be fenced and used as the game farm. A game farm licence can cover one or more

- contiguous properties provided the applicant is the registered owner or lessee of the land in respect of which the licence is being sought;
- Obtain a copy of the leasehold agreement if game farm is not registered to applicant;
  - Prepare a development plan for the property (see section 3 (2) (a) (i) of the [Game Farm Regulation](#)) which will be included in Part C of the Game Farm Licence Application. Refer to Appendix A of these guidelines for information regarding perimeter fencing for the property;
  - Carefully read and understand applicable provincial legislation;
  - Carefully read and understand the [Game Farm Regulation](#) and these guidelines; and
  - It is recommended that the [British Columbia Bison Association](#) be contacted for additional information prior to construction of facilities.

### ***Game Farmer Responsibilities***

A licenced game farmer has responsibilities under the legislation to ensure that the game farm animals are kept on the game farm, and that their health and welfare is maintained. In particular, the game farmer must

- Prevent game farm animals from coming into contact with wildlife by:
  - maintaining perimeter fences and facilities;
  - immediate removal of wildlife "attractants" (e.g. mortalities);
  - other steps as necessary.
- Ensure that game farm animal handling and husbandry procedures are conducted in a humane manner by experienced individuals using proper equipment and accepted techniques. Game farmers should be aware that some procedures will require the assistance of a veterinarian.

### ***Application for a Game Farm Licence***

A separate game farm licence is required for each species of game to be farmed. A person may apply for a game farm licence online from the Ministry of Agriculture website or by contacting:

Plant and Animal Health Branch  
Ministry of Agriculture  
1767 Angus Campbell Rd.  
Abbotsford, BC  
V3G 2M3  
Ph: (604) 556-3093

Fax: (604) 556-3015  
Toll Free: 1-877-877-2474

The completed licence application must be submitted to the Plant and Animal Health Branch together with a \$200 application fee and photos of the completed game farm enclosure(s). Cheques are to be made payable to the Minister of Finance.

Upon receipt and approval of the completed application, the Plant and Animal Health Branch will issue a Game Farm Licence. The licence entitles a game farmer to operate during the current licence year or any portion thereof.

The licence is issued annually, and is effective from February 1 to January 31 inclusive.

*Game farm licences are not transferable or assignable.*

### ***Annual Renewal of Game Farm Licences***

A licence expires on January 31 each year. A renewal notice will be sent to licensees from the Plant and Animal Health Branch, which must be returned with the renewal fee of \$100 and a completed Annual Inventory and Transaction Report. This Report form is available on the Ministry website or from the Plant and Animal Health Branch.

*If the renewal fee and the Annual Inventory and Transaction Report are not submitted, the licence will not be renewed.*

### ***Amendment to Development Plan***

Prior to making any significant changes, a licensed game farmer must notify the Plant and Animal Health Branch describing the proposed changes. Advice will be given by the Branch as to any information that may be required to be submitted.

### ***Completing the Annual Inventory and Transaction Report***

Any change to the status of the game farm herd inventory must be recorded. Transactions should be recorded when they occur, and includes animals born,

purchased, sold, slaughtered, and deceased. If a newborn dies after being born alive, two entries must be completed – one for "born" and the other for "death on farm".

It is also necessary to report animals that require eartags to be replaced. When an animal's eartag is missing, enter the new registration number followed by the old number, if known, and check "Replacement Tag" (R).

## **EARTAGGING**

### ***Purpose***

Eartagging requirements are set out in Part XV of the federal [Health of Animals Regulation](#). Only federally approved Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags, available from approved sources such as the [Canadian Bison Association](#) may be used for bison. Bison RFID tags are part of a number sequence allocated to bison and are white in colour.

When an animal is sold to another game farm in British Columbia, the RFID tag accompanies the animal. The animal is not retagged by the new owner.

## **ESCAPE**

### ***Escape of Game Farm Animals***

Licensees must ensure that game farm animals do not escape from their facilities. Proper maintenance of fences and facilities including regular visual inspections and effective management practices will assist in minimizing escape of game farm animals. If escapes do occur, the game farmer must make every effort to recapture them under sections 12 and 13 of the [Game Farm Regulation](#).

### ***Liability and Trespass***

Licensees are responsible for any and all damage caused by escaped game. See section 11 of the [Livestock Act](#).

# **PURCHASING, EXHIBITING AND TRANSPORTING ANIMALS**

## ***Purchasing Animals From Within British Columbia or Other Provinces***

The Ministry of Agriculture does not require health inspections when a farmer purchases animals within BC or from another province. However, a game farmer may wish to have a veterinarian examine the animal(s) prior to purchase to prevent any diseases from being introduced into the herd. The introduction of new game animals to the farm must be reported on the Annual Inventory and Transaction Report. Be sure that the animals have been identified with federally approved RFID eartags. Game farmers should familiarize themselves with section 76 of the federal [Health of Animals Regulations](#) regarding movement permits for bison.

## ***Purchasing Animals From Outside of Canada***

Requirements for importing animals into Canada are set out in the [Health of Animals Regulations](#) (section 12). Producers should familiarize themselves with the requirements. Game farmers can obtain a [federal Import Permit](#) from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to purchase animals outside of Canada.

## ***Exporting Animals***

Game farmers must contact the nearest office of the [CFIA](#) for any instructions that may be required to export animals out of BC.

Animals that are exported must be recorded on the Annual Inventory and Transaction Report. Other provinces and other countries have specific import requirements, and the onus is on the game farmer (exporter) and the person purchasing the animals (importer) to meet these requirements before the shipping takes place.

## ***Transporting Animals***

Transportation of animals should be done humanely and must meet the standards as set out in the federal [Health of Animals Regulations](#) (see Part XII Transport of Animals).



### ***Exhibiting Animals***

Animals are required to be confined while they are not under the direct control of the game farmer. Under section 11 of the [Game Farm Regulation](#), animals are required to be contained in a manner that prevents escape.

It is suggested that at certain times of the year, exhibition of animals should be restricted if the animals are in a state that is dangerous to other animals and to the public (e.g. in heat).

## APPENDIX A – Fencing and Facility Specifications

It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that the animals are contained at all times. All perimeter fencing should be constructed bearing this in mind.

### ***Fencing***

Fencing standards for bison farms are not specified by the Ministry of Agriculture. However, licensees are responsible for confining their bison to the licensed premises; therefore fencing is to be constructed and maintained adequately to prevent bison from escaping.

The Canadian Bison Association has developed a [Code of Practice](#) that recommends fencing and husbandry standards.

It is also recommended that the [B.C. Agricultural Fencing Handbook](#) be referenced.

### ***Facilities***

Corrals or paddocks and "chutes" are required to assemble animals.

Handling (retention) equipment (e.g. bison "squeeze") is required that will enable restraining and holding of individual animals in a humane and safe manner for inspection and health examinations/treatments.