

BUFFALO

Buffalo, buffalo, where for art thou buffalo? Well in the state of California, specifically in Mendocino County, J Bar S Ranch has bison. "The real term used by ranchers and people in the business is bison," said Jim Lawson owner of J bar S Ranch. "People outside of the business usually call them buffalo." Buffalo are bison and bison are buffalo to erase any confusion.

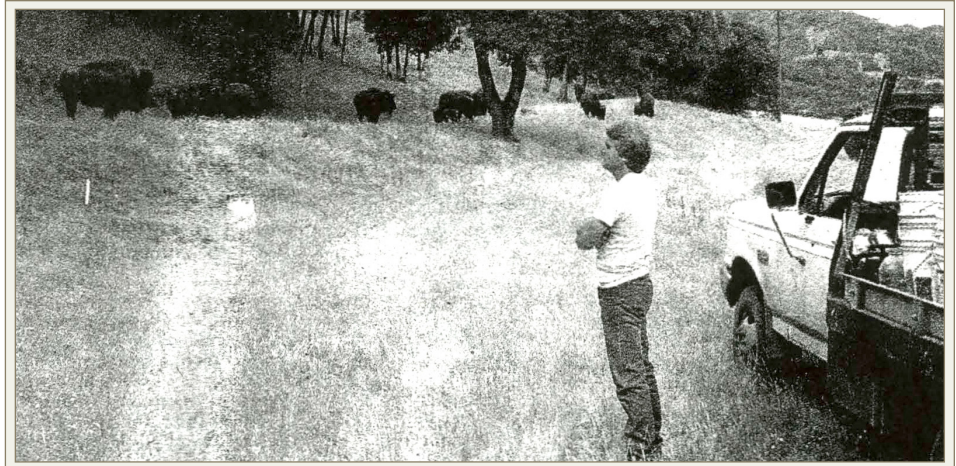
Lawson bought his first piece of land off of Highway 20 in 1966 and now owns about 1,000 (1 acres for his ranch. He was in the construction business and commuted from San Jose to build his ranch and home here in Ukiah. "I am a country boy at heart and my dream was to have a ranch," Lawson said.

Lawson started his bison business in 1986. "We started with a cow, calf and a bull. Then we got up to 10 head, then we got to 20 then we eventually got to 100 and that was a little too much for the ranch." He only herds buffalo and has between 75 to 80 head on his ranch which keep him and his five other ranch hands busy. "We take a tremendous amount of pride in this ranch and our bison," he said.

Buffalo are wild animals and can range from a 2,200 pound bull to a mature cow of 1800 pounds so you want to give them their space because they are very strong animals. "You don't really herd bison," Lawson said. "You just get behind them and try and steer them in the direction you want to go. They are usually pretty docile animals but they aren't pets."

J Bar S' Ranch offers many things to people interested in buffalo or their byproducts. "We have tours of the ranch," Lawson said. "We have a vehicle called the Tatonka Wagon that fits about 10 people in it and Totonka is the Sioux word for buffalo. We take them right into the herds and it usually lasts about two hours." Lawson also has a lake on the ranch that has events like marriages and has gotten well known throughout the area. "It's nice to be well known and have people use your ranch as a landmark."

J Bar S Ranch also has a store where you can



find anything bison. "We just got into the meat business about three years ago and just recently opened the Bison Store five days a week," Lawson said. "You can find anything from fine buffalo meat to robes and skins. Anything you want with buffalo we can get." J Bar S Ranch is the largest producer in the state of California and tries to take care of the buffalo best as possible. "We probably have some of the finest handling facilities in the business," Lawson said. "The American bison is as American and majestic as you can get."

Buffalo is a much leaner meat than beef of chicken and is a healthy alternative to both. "Bison is lower in cholesterol, fat and calories than most any other meal" Lawson said. Lawson was originally born in Texas but loves his ranch and home in Ukiah. "I love the ranch and Mendocino county." The Bison Store on J Bar S Ranch is open Tuesday through Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It's located at 6201 Highway 20 in Ukiah and can be reached at 4856852.

Also for more information about bison visit www.bisoncentral.com.

By **JAMES ARENS**

Contact James Arens at
udjja@pacijic.net

