

Bison/Elk Herd Manager – Zoological Operations

Position Summary:

Wildlife Prairie Park has often been referred to as a jewel in the Midwest. Located just outside of Peoria, IL, this 2,000-acre zoological park is home to over 150 animals/50 different species that are native to Illinois. Our guests come to learn about wolves, bison, waterfowl, black bears, elk, cougar, otters and much more. The park opened in 1978 and since its inception, Wildlife Prairie Park has strived to promote its mission of conservation, education, and recreation.

The Bison and Elk Herd Manager-Zoological Operations fosters a positive working environment by delivering top quality care to ensure the bison and elk herd thrive, incorporating the latest advancements in animal welfare research. This role collaborates closely with Wildlife Prairie Park staff, the USDA, and other regulatory agencies to identify and address health concerns, manage nutritional requirements, and collect and record genetic and performance data. Additionally, the manager oversees disease prevention, animal acquisition, husbandry practices, behavioral enrichment, and enclosure design and maintenance, ensuring all policies and procedures meet or exceed USDA and other regulatory standards.

Essential Duties

- Develops and implements health management plans and procedures to ensure consistent health of the herd.
- Coordinate with veterinarians for routine care, vaccinations, and medical treatment.
- Visually checks the herd to monitor their general condition and look for external parasites and injuries.
- Visually checks the enclosures for breaches and makes routine fence repairs including replacing posts, fencing.
- Collects fecal samples to determine whether internal parasites are present.
- Applies appropriate treatment for identified parasites.
- Participates in determining a vaccination schedule for the herd and amounts of vaccines and medications required.
- Develops medicated mineral combinations to address specific health problems.
- Monitors the herd for problems during calving time and collects deceased calves for postmortem examination.
- Manages the production of feed and feed supplements to meet the health and nutritional needs of the herd as economically as possible.
- Formulates mineral and vitamin combinations to enhance conception rates and ensure a healthy gestation.

- Negotiates with feed company representatives to produce feed supplements.
- Formulates feed rations for weaned calves and monitors their health and condition during confinement.
- Collect soil samples from the hay ground to determine fertilizer needs and fertilize accordingly to maximize hay production and increase protein content in the hay.
- Plans and coordinates hay harvest activities by determining schedules, directing daily work activities, and maintaining equipment in working condition.
- Participates in budget planning discussions for feed and supplements.
- Develops and maintains database records of genetic and performance data to enable effective selection of breeding stock that meets the division's goals for herd bull selection, and to provide supporting data for sale stock.
- Records initial weights of calves at weaning time, and weight gains at regular intervals.
- Records fertility test results and scrotal data.
- Creates graphs and reports showing genetic and performance data for sale bulls.
- Prepares reports from statistics for use in the planning process.
- Coordinates a variety of activities that relate to managing the herd to control herd size and movement, and marketing herd surplus.
- Select replacement herd bulls and breeding bulls for sale.
- Markets sale stock by meeting with buyers to provide information and assistance.
- Supervises handling and care of sale animals while they are confined.
- Coordinate roundup events and assist with a safety briefing.
- Coordinates maintenance and upkeep of the fences to make as safe a working environment as possible for employees and animals, and an attractive viewing area for the public that meets all requirements from the USDA.
- Responsible for the operation and upkeep of heavy equipment and machinery including tractors, skid steer, dump trucks, mowers, backhoe, and other hand- held tools.
- Attend meetings, conferences, and seminars both on and off site.
- Communicate information regarding animals and education opportunities and related matters to the public in an educational and entertaining manner- including Adventure Trek.
- Performs other work as assigned.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Required

- Proficiency in animal handling techniques, including capture, restraint and transport.
- Certified Livestock Manager license (or ability to obtain within 12 months of hire)
- Familiarity with relevant USDA regulations.
- Strong communication and leadership skills, with the ability to work collaboratively across departments.
- Attention to detail for maintaining accurate records and ensuring compliance with all regulations.

- Desired but not required—bachelor's degree in wildlife management, Agriculture Business, Animal Science, or related field.

Minimum Requirements:

- Minimum of 5-10 years of experience working on a ranch with livestock management, specifically with large animals such as bison or elk.
- Certified Livestock Manager license (or ability to obtain within 12 months of hire)
- Demonstrated experience in habitat management, including managing pasture health, forage quality and rotational grazing practices.
- Valid Driver's License.

Interpersonal Skills:

- The ideal candidate in this role should be professional, have a positive attitude, an active, energetic mind, and a leadership style that is characterized by highly ethical practices and a commitment to diversity, openness, flexibility, integrity, and kindness.
- Excellent interpersonal skills to create positive working relationships.
- Independent judgement, strategic vision, technical expertise, and hands-on leadership