



## So, You Want a Bison Bottle Baby?

We do not sell bottle babies and we don't tell you where you can find them or how to take care of them. The reason is simple: I do not wish to take any responsibility for your injury or death.

Nothing is cuter than a baby bison. Everyone wants one. My wife wants to hug one. It seems to be the latest craze. They are just fluffy cows and a bottle fed bison will follow you around like a little puppy. They can be halter broke, and even broke to saddle. Who wouldn't want one?

The problem is that not all animals are meant to be kept as pets and keeping them often lead to darker consequences. There is a distinction between animals which can be kept as pets and those that are wild and people who break this code often have very unfortunate accidents plaguing them. Sometimes they just end up paying a price much higher than the one they paid to acquire the pet.

Abandoned bison babies, either due to rejection or death of the cow, are rare. Those that occur at reputable bison ranches are generally cared for at the ranch or given away to other reputable bison producers willing to put in the effort to care for the youngster – the interests are in health and welfare of the bison, not to make a buck.

Then there is the other side. The disreputable bison “producer”, perhaps better described as a bison dealer, who always seems to have bottle babies available. It seems they are always having abandoned babies that need a home. Some are already halter broke. Some dealers purchase bred females, house them in small quarters, take the babies away from their mother as soon as they are born before they imprint and send the mothers off to slaughter. That way they can “honestly” say the mother died, that's why they have a bottle baby. From someone seeking advice: “Yes, *she was pulled off her mom. The guy sells bottle babies.*” Do you really want to support this trade?

Bison are not cattle. Cattle have been domesticated for over 10,000 years. Bison have been held in captivity for maybe 200 years. Do you really think a bottle bison will be the same as a bottle cattle? Look at all the pictures of bison bottle babies. Do you



Bison bottle babies are cute and great fun for the family. But they do get older and dangerous. If you want a bottle baby, get a cattle calf.

notice that they are all youngsters? They get progressively more dangerous as they get older. Not because they are mean, but because bison are bison and have a violent social structure.

Think of that cute baby raccoon you found and raised on a bottle. Great little pet until it gets older then you have to let it loose. It comes back every so often and lets you pet it, which you do cautiously, but you don't dare pick it up anymore. Same thing with a bison except that 35-45 pound raccoon is now a 1000-1800 pound bison.



Most bottle babies are taken from their mothers and housed in confinement until they can be "broken".

People have been maimed and killed by pet bears, pet lions, pet tigers, pet deer, pet hippos, and yes, pet bison. In fact, more people have probably been injured by pet bison than "tourons" (tourists + morons) in Yellowstone. Too many bison are kept as pets. i.e., bison owners as opposed to bison producers, that try to tame them and treat them like cattle rather than letting bison be bison. These are accidents waiting to happen.

I was recently contacted by a novice bison owner that recently purchased a "gentle" 4-year old bison bull. The bison was always getting in his "space", too close for comfort, and had no fear of him whatsoever. He felt the bison's behavior was dangerous. He wanted to know what he could do about it. This animal was clearly an older bottle baby that the original owners decided it was now too much to deal with or they recognized it was too dangerous to keep and sold it.

Abandoned baby bison are rare, although you would think they are common based on the number that turn up for sale each year. If you are a *bona fide* bison producer you would not be asking me questions as you know what to do and where to find the resources you need. If you are a bison owner with a few bison in your backyard, I will not believe that you have an actual abandoned baby bison as opposed to supporting an unethical trade in bison bottle babies.

I have a herd of over 75 bison for the last 10 years and have yet to have an abandoned calf.

So please do not call me about a bison bottle baby. Instead, go buy yourself a cattle bottle baby. They are just as cute and a lot safer

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