Tape 19 Druska Kinkie

Paradise Valley sitting in living rooms and dining areas.

My husband was born and raised here and he is 57. As producers when the initial case of brucellosis happened in May of last year (2007) and that was in Bridgerer, which is down by Red Lodge. That herd had connections to the Immigrant area here so it brought it kind of close to home. They depopulated that entire herd. The consequence from that, it became very political. The Governor wanted to invoke split state status, which would define an area around the park to be treated differently. Split state status does absolutely nothing to protect the cattle within that area. It’s just a line drawn in the sand so to speak and one side is treated differently that the other. The producers, actually my husband (2:25) and myself, we spent a lot of time going back and forth, what do we do, how do we stop this? One of the ideas was we need to come up with a proactive response. You can’t just let things be done to you; you have to take an active role. So the proactive response the producers came up with was basically a letter written that said, “let us take charge, let us basically create and enhanced surveillance (2:42) area.” We’ll deal with our disease and we’ll try to protect our cattle. The way that you do that is multiple in that you have to keep temporal and spatial separation between wildlife and cattle; you can adult vaccinate your cattle and that would be the young ones that you keep. Almost all ranchers official calf hood vaccinate. Then the adult vaccinating would be on top of that. When we took this proposal, we took it multiple places. We started off in Paradise Valley. We met as a small group of producers. We edited, perfected, and took this positive proactive response to the Board of Livestock. We took it to our county (3:34) commissioners and we asked our county commissioner to help support us. They saw it as quite an economic problem for the county because if you split this area off from the rest of the state it will have negative economic impact on the cattle industry in this area. Economically that’s bad. That’s one of the reasons why the county commissioners were able to step up. They actually did a local resolution that said they were in favor of the ranchers’ proposal and against split state status. They took that resolution locally and took it to the Montana Association of Counties. (4:19) They meet once a year and they divide up in committees. They have an ag committee (which) developed another resolution and all 50 counties in Montana signed on with that and it is a resolution against split state status. From there we took all of that to the Board of Livestock. We said we need to protect the cattle industry and we need to deal with disease and split state doesn’t help us with any of that so let us go forward with our producer proposal. So then (4:58) they backed off of it saying they would let the producer proposal go forward. All of February and March were small group meetings, initially headed by members of our small groups here and we all went out separate geographic directions within the Valley. Then we created small groups bringing other producers in and we met with the state vet they hired to do herd plans. Herd plans basically are a risk assessment, best management practice and then how are we going to protect you. For most of us in the valley it’s some form of testing and vaccination as well as the spatial separation from wildlife and I’ll use myself and Rich as an example. (6:00) We agreed to a testing program of our cattle that will begin in December of this year and we will vaccinate next spring all of our adult cattle. The reason why there’s such a time difference at this point is twofold. One is having seen the experience of the people in Bridger when the disease was found in the spring. They basically lost an entire year’s income because their calves became worthless so we told all producers, then they made their own decisions, don’t do any testing this spring while you have baby calves on the ground. You need to wait until their gone so you don’t have that risk. (6:46) So we will be testing all of our cattle in December after this year’s calf crop is gone. The other reason why we haven’t vaccinated yet is because we’re going to use the calf hood dose, which has a much higher strength than the adult dose, and so should be more effective but therefor the abortion rate could increase so you want to do that on open cattle. The only time that we have cattle open is March and this March they couldn’t get it together quick enough and the window between vaccinating and breeding for too small because there’s no date out there that tells you whether this modified live vaccine you’ll be giving will affect you conception (7:32) rates. On some of the other vaccines that we give cows for other diseases, they can actually inflame the ovaries and affect your conception rate so you have to make sure there’s enough space between your vaccinations and your breeding cycle. Those were the reasons Rich and I chose to do it how we are. This latest disease that was found was because of herd plans and voluntary testing. They would not have found this case pf brucellosis if we had not enacted herd plans and done the testing. I say would not have found, would not have found it as soon. There (8:19) could have been any other transmissions that occurred. At this point they have one solitary animal. It’s not because she wasn’t taken care of properly in terms she got an official calf hood vaccinate when she was supposed to at 11 months and because the vaccine is only 60-70% effective she was not able to mount a response. So those are the tools that we’re given to work with. You have temporal and special separation with wildlife, you have vaccines that are not as effective as you need them to be and you have wildlife that are uncontrolled. It’s a tough situation for ranching and it’s a tough situation for (9:14) conservationists who love their wildlife and don’t want anything to happen to them. At this point where we stand, because of the second case of brucellosis that was found, Montana has lost its class free status and we’re downgraded to Class A. there will be quite a bit more testing that the entire state has to do. One of the other fallacies with split state when it came out was, it was going to make a difference as far as how the rest of the state was treated. People need to understand that each state vet can enact their own regulations; they’re not bound by a central plan of action. So when our first case of brucellosis occurred (10:05) last year, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, or maybe Nebraska, they all started with more regulations, there would be. They already had this animals need to be tested 30 days before they leave the state kind of thing. Thinking that the rest of the state wasn’t in some way going to be penalized because of brucellosis was a fallacy. Now the requirement that will be in place is any animal that’s sexually intact will have to be tested 30 days before it leaves the state. The good part about all of the work that we have done this year is in order to regain your (10:55) status; you’d have to do herd plans anyway. Because we in Paradise Valley in particular, we’ve stepped up to the plate, tried to be proactive, tried to do protection. We should be ahead of the game in trying to regain out status. However, the political portion of this is that Governor Schweitzer is still pushing extremely hard for split state status and we expect in July (2008) that the Board of Livestock meeting on the 21st and 22nd that they will vote to go forward with that, which will decimate the cattle industry in Paradise Valley. We will not be able to stand up to the economic repercussions of split state and once they enact split state status it will (11:46) never go away. We will be forever separate. We’re hoping that the governor wants to go forward that APHIS and Washington will see the reasons not to and will not approve the state’s application for split state status. But we have done all that we know to do to protect the cattle industry and highlight the disease at wildlife level. When we took the producer’s proposal to the Board of Livestock in January, we said the resources were better spent on cattle protection and disease control not filling out the forms for split state status and the only way we would succeed is if livestock producers formed a (12:39) partnership with the Department of Livestock and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. So far the only thing that’s happened is the producers have stepped up and prepared plans. We have no aspirations with Fish Wildlife and Parks and Department of Livestock is going to go ahead and support the governor. It’s not a very pretty situation.

Open up for questions---

Brad- The economic hardship you may face with the split state status, if you could elaborate a little more on that…

Druska (13:49) That’s sort of unclear, we don’t even know. When the governor says split state status, we have yet to see what his plan looks like. He’s never given us boundaries. He’s never given us any kind of avenue of how we would control that, how we would regulate it. What it would look like, when it might end. Basically the way producers feel is once it’s there; there are 2 things that happen. One there’s no incentive to go after the disease in wildlife. Right now they incentive is to protect the cattle industry. If we sacrifice the area around Yellowstone National Park, meaning the Greater Yellowstone Area, if we sacrifice that in a split state, you’ve lost all incentive (14:41) to deal with the disease. Secondly, the fear is once it’s there, there’s no incentive to remove it. If you haven’t dealt with the disease, you’re not going to remove the boundary and therefore you will be, this area would be subject to more testing than the rest of the state. The rest of the state would get its status back within that 14-month period and we’d be left.

Brad- The additional testing; you bear the brunt of that the financial burden.

Druska (15:18) Interestingly, if you have a herd plan at this point the testing and vaccinating we agree to do is paid for out of APHIS funds. They always say as long as the funds hold out. I think other people within the state, this is really not very fair, without herd plans would possibly be paying for their own testing. Now, in our case, we sell feeder calves. These are all less than 18 months, even though the heifers would be sexually intact, at this point we wouldn’t have to do any testing but the problem is that stigma attached to where you’re coming from and that fear that you would be bringing it. The meat itself, all of those things, there’s no problem with any of that. Market-wise, if you have a feeder in the Midwest (16:27) he has a choice of 650-700 lb calves from Point A versus the GYA, chances are he’s going to go to the Point A and he’s going to bypass the GYA.

John Conant- Could you give us a perspective on the scale of the problem, how many ranchers affected, how many head of cattle and what percentage is that of the state’s population.

Druska- (16:59) I could look it up in my paperwork. If I remember correctly it’s a quarter of that includes seven counties that surround Yellowstone of those that’s a quarter and I can get the exact numbers.

The other problem is, all seven counties signed on to do this proactive producer proposal and herd plans. I don’t know if it’s good or bad at this point, but because we were organized Paradise Valley’s the only one that stepped up and got it done. Like is said, I don’t know if it’s good or bad at this point.

John -I’m from the city, what’s a herd plan?

Druska- A herd plan is basically an analysis (18:01) of your risk. What it looks like is you come together, you look at do you have fenced haystacks, do you have co-mingling with wildlife during their critical abortive time period, which is January through June? Do you have a high rate of abortions in your cattle? If you have an abortion, do you take it in to be tested? Do you official calf hood vaccinate? Those were all some of the questions that were asked. For us, we fence every haystack we have. This year, we moved our cattle, we have cattle that go across the road here, and in their critical abortive time period- February, March, and April, we get a lot of Yellowstone (18:59) Park elk so we moved everything to this side of the road since the highways sort of a natural barrier. We calve on this side of the road so there’s less chance of interaction of nose to abortion contact which would contaminate our cattle. We don’t have a high abortion rate. So you answer all these questions, abortion rate, conception rate, # of open cows you run meaning not pregnant, if any of those numbers are high it might trigger a hmmm, we should look into this, maybe you have a risk. Do this risk assessment and from there you decide (19:39) do you need to adult vaccinate, how much testing do you need to do and go forward from there. There are voluntary herd plans. You’re not bound by them, and by agreement on both sides they can be altered or dropped.

John -Who helps you with that? Who do you actually work with?

Druska- State vet, who actually worked in Wyoming for a time and had actually been the state vet. in Montana for a time. He came back to help. He actually practiced in the valley at one time, so he had a lot of rapport with ranchers. He came in and met with all the small groups and then individually with ranchers and he put together. In the valley alone we probably have (20:29) 30-35 herd plans in this place. As I said it was a herd plan for this small ranch that caught it, caught the disease.

John - How far is that ranch from here?

Druska- It’s another 8 miles north. That’s also interesting, in some of the perimeters the governor spoke of that ranch is outside those perimeters and for the most part they get no Yellowstone Park elk (21:13) an occasional one or two. Then that opens up a whole new can of worms about native, resident elk and how infected are they and FWP (Fish, Wildlife and Parks) has absolutely no data in this valley on resident elk. One of the things we tried to stress all along is we want everything we do to be based on sound science and how can you assess your risk if you have no idea of the sew prevalence in the elk that you’re dealing with.

John- When we were in West Yellowstone, they told us they didn’t bring cattle in until June 15. What’s the situation here, are cattle here year round?

Druska-(21:56) No, those would be lease lands with federal grazing leases and that is another way to mitigate your risk. We only run on private ground and our summer ground is on Trail Creek, which is 20 miles that direction towards Bozeman and we have lots of elk, all native or resident, and we don’t know how infected those are, but that’s where our cattle run in the summer. We didn’t go in there until June 20 this year.

John- (22:34) In the valley, what percentage of land is private?

Druska- Most everybody runs on private. There’s not a lot of federal BLM grazing leases for a variety of reasons. One point I’d make about wolves at this point is up until the reintroduction of the wolf we never had Yellowstone National Park elk here. The wolf changed the migration habit of the elk and because of that it doesn’t matter if in the beginning there were 19,000 elk in the Northern herd, now there’s what, 6 or 7 thousand in the Northern herd, the population has (23:34) declined dramatically. However, their migration patterns are set. We still get 2-300 elk on a hay field we have across the road every spring. It’s past the hunting seasons. It’s right before green up, you’re only option to make those elk leave is to haze them. FWP ended up, they paid someone for almost two months to come in on almost a daily basis and haze elk off us, through the next lands and back to Dome Mountain Game Range. One of the things they pointed out, it’s the squeaky wheel gets the grease kind of thing and we squeaked a lot, and in the past we’ve always been able to count on FWP to move these elk. (24:30) They have always done it in the past based on damage – damage to the field, damage to the hay, damage to grazing – that’s why they said they were doing it this time even though for us it was based on disease. When we talked to the regional supervisor in Bozeman, he said legislatively in the state they have no authority to move elk based on disease. They have authority to move elk based on damage, not disease. That’s one area right there that’s sort of a huge red flag, if you’re going to start separating wildlife from cattle, elk in particular; you better have (25:11) the legislation that allows you to do that. So when the legislature meets again this year, is it this year they meet? They meet every other year and I can’t remember – they’re going to have to look at some of those legislative regulatory issues and make it possible for FWP to step up and do some more movement based on disease.

--Are you more worried about the elk or the buffalo?

Druska - For us, it’s the elk. It’s sort of two fold. The general consensus is that if you clean up the bison, they’re a lot like cattle, they calve in a group, everything they do is sort of group-related (25:57). When elk calve, they calve off solitary. The consensus is that if you clean up the bison, the elk will clean up themselves because they go off to calve so abortion or calving fluid that’s left out there it’s not as likely for another elk to come out there and sniff it while the bug is hot. Whereas with bison, everybody comes over and smells it. That’s one thought. The other part of that is the elk are what migrate down here and that’s only because of the IBMP and all of those issues associated with that keep the bison south of Yankee Jim Canyon. If the bison aren’t kept south and they migrate this way, then we have just as much problem with the bison as we do the elk.

(27:09) One of the other political hot potatoes having to do with this whole issue is what they call the Memorandum of Understanding. That is a document that was signed by the three governors – Idaho, Montana and Wyoming – and the Department of the Interior and Department of Ag I think and that Memorandum of Understanding controls the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis committee, which is charged with controlling and eliminating the disease and protecting the livestock. (27:45) That Memorandum of Understanding was originally signed in 1995 when we have Governor Roscoe. It came up for renewal in 2000 and because of political issues it has yet to be signed by Governor Schweitzer. Idaho, Wyoming and Washington have all signed it and he has not. Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee can’t go forward without the Memorandum of Understanding so that’s a real problem. The latest thing I heard is it might have gone back to Washington for some more changes. At one point, Governor Schweitzer sent it back, Secretary Yohan thought it was too watered down or maybe it was John Cliftis of APHIS, anyway one of those higher ups (28:43) thought it was too watered down, corrected it, sent it back, but it sits. It isn’t getting signed and getting enacted. So we need some of the politics to leave this situation and some common sense and science to prevail and go forward with trying to control disease and protect livestock. There’s got to be a way to do both.

Charlie Amlaner - If you had your optimal situation or solution, what would you like to see? For all of the different problems with the bison and the elk and intermingling, the potential for vaccinations and the like…

Druska - Ideal would be Yellowstone National Park recognizing that it needs to be a better neighbor and that has many, many issues associated with it. One being, I don’t know if they can adopt a total hands-off practice anymore. This winter there were a number of bison killed. Nobody likes to see that kind of thing, but they were very, very overpopulated and they’re carrying capacity is 2,500-3,000. It was well over 5,000. When you have those kinds of numbers, they’re going to spill out. When they spill out you’re not a good neighbor anymore. Now then you’ve got the elk, which their numbers are down, but they’re still everywhere. (30:31) That’s where FWP has to step up and they need to start practicing some sort of science based, let’s see how infected we are and if we find a certain resident herd that’s more infected than another, how are we going to protect that ranching community? Whether it’s hunting that they use, whether it’s just basically doing a trapping and killing type thing that they do with the bison, none of it’s popular. I don’t think it’s really responsible to have diseased wildlife running around. We’re not allowed to have diseased cattle seen around, so I think that we have to do a better (31:23) job of controlling the disease in the wildlife. The other thing really has got to do and I don’t know why the pharmaceutical companies aren’t going forward, but we have got a vaccine that’s lousy. If you can only get 60-70% efficacy in a vaccine, that’s lousy and even adult vaccinating we were told by a doctor Passqual at MSU, who does a lot of research, we can only hope to get a 5-10% increase in immunity. Well it’s a tool, but that’s not a great tool. If you’re going to go risk of testing all of your cattle and vaccinating, you should have better efficacy. You should have something that will give you a boost in immunity (32:15) that’s really up there and they can’t do that. And I don’t understand why given modern medicine and all the research and development that we have that we cannot come up with a better vaccine. That’s a real problem.

Charlie - Do you think with Montana losing its brucellosis-free status and with the volume of cattle has vaccinated will this drive the pharmaceutics to produce a better, higher efficacy vaccine? And two is there competition at all in the vaccination development area.

Druska - I think it’s just one company. I don’t there’s a lot. You know it wasn’t a well-known company, because I asked that and it wasn’t one that I’d heard of. I don’t think there’s a lot of competition out there, which usually drives improvements so not that and I just don’t see that people are stepping up.

The other thing that has to occur is that they have got to eliminate the feeding grounds in Wyoming and Idaho for elk. That has been a source of infection in Wyoming. Just to give you (34:18) an idea, the latest outbreak that Wyoming had in Daniels, which is what we were told the other night is a 500-600 cow operation, both commercial and purebred. The first half of the cattle they found a dozen hot reactor types. You’ve got to go through a lot more testing to make sure that’s confirmed and then in the second half they found just as many. That’s a lot of reactors in one herd. When you talk about them being purebred then how far a field they have gone selling replacements and bulbs. That’s a huge problem. Feed grounds, sometimes you get migratory elk this direction from the feed grounds. They carry an incidence of 20% brucellosis. The feed grounds have got to be gone. (35:17) The Park has to be a good neighbor. Then everybody has to step up and do the enhanced surveillance, that’s FWP, that’s producers. I think the partnerships can work if the politics leave.

Tim Skinner - The cattle association throughout the state, I guess I was under the assumption that they were a very powerful lobby because you’ve got cattle ranching throughout the entire state so that’s going to have a big impact on national and state political levels if they came out split state status… …is the cattlemen’s association willing to sacrifice you guys are not united…when I came here I though they were a powerful lobby and the buffalo were the sacrifice. What I’m hearing you say doesn’t really involve the buffalo so much as the elk who don’t seem to be as big a part of the equation as they should be. Where is the cattlemen’s association and are they willing to sacrifice you guys for this split state status?

Druska (37:02) - Well, the answer to that is there are 2 cattle associations in the state: Montana Stockgrowers and Montana Cattlemen’s Association. The Stockgrowers are adamantly opposed to split state status. They are not (37:19) willing to sacrifice anybody to this and have come out over and over again with that position,, why it’s not good for the industry and why we need to stand united. Montana Cattlemen’s Association was for split state status. Now the problem comes there are people within Montana Cattlemen’s Association, this is where it gets political again, that we’re very outspoken for split state status in supporting the governor, but if you polled their membership, they were not. But the president, vice president, ex president of MCA came out and said we are for it. Now the National Cattlemen’s Association came out against split state status. It gets very, very confusing. Right now within the (38:25) state, Montana Stockgrowers and Farm Bureau are our biggest allies. They’re supporting the producers, they want the cattle industry to remain healthy and strong and united. They want an enhanced surveillance area, which you know in some respects you’re still separate because we’re an enhanced area but it’s totally different than putting a split state status bonus that you cant ever get away from, you don’t get any help with split state still doesn’t address protection and enhanced surveillance area does. And those are the big (39:06) differences. We do have support from some, but there’s a small fraction in the state that would prefer not.

Tim- I’m looking at this as somewhat of quarantine on your product. (Does the) State help you bear cost of burden? (Are you) Working on getting state to help you pay for any additional costs?

Druska - Because we have the herd plans in place, that is within our herd plan that the Department of Livestock and APHIS share that cost of testing and vaccinating so we have that financial help. But we do not have any help with say management practices you have to shift, such as moving (40:11) cattle from on area to another. May require hay feeding here where you had grass over here. For example, they don’t help with fencing, that’s not part of the dollars that come and so this, I know people who fence hay meadows with elk proof fencing to keep them away, electric fencing, they don’t help with those kinds of mitigation tools. They’ve talked about when they form these partnerships, who’s going to be responsible for what tools within this enhanced surveillance area.

(40:47) FWP is being asked to provide hazers so you can make the elk and fencing. The Department of Livestock and APHIS are sharing the cost of vaccinating and testing.

Charlie- Anybody doing additional genetic studies on disease monitoring?

Druska- Not that I know of.

Charlie- And that’s what you also need for that sound science.

Druska- You do. Well they’ve asked in the paperwork that I have that they want FWP to do more science on how are we going to figure out how infected these herds are here. Right now, what they do, they give hunters theses kits. When you go out and get a cow elk, they want you to get blood, put it in a test tube and send it to them. Well, it must be harder than what it sounds like. They have a terrible time getting viable samples. I’ve seen the data. They get less than half back. Of the half they get back, less than half of those are viable. It’s very inexact in helpful way to do it, so use a trap like this and you could (42:08) get the data you need and they’ve talked about more check stations so when the hunter gets their animal and they’re going through people managing the check station could get blood or tissue samples.

John- Let me attack that another way and set up a really crazy scenario and ask you to, respond for me? Decision makers decree elk and buffalo can roam free but that’s a takings from you so the federal government would then be obligated to restore what they’ve taken from you. How would your production process change and what would it take to protect you from the loss? Could you and how could you be made economically whole under that scenario?

Druska (43:06) If they do allow the bison, and the elk do kind of roam free and they’re already a problem, if they allowed the bison to come the rest of the way and they just opened up Paradise Valley, we would leave, there would be no way.

-Electric fences on…

Druska- Part of the problem with that is when a bison aborts here and it’s a hot fetus, birds other (43:56) scavengers, all of those can transmit that disease. So it’s not a case of even just isolating on one pile of afterbirth that is bad and the brucelli bug can live for 90 day in certain conditions so there is no way to control that kind of disease other than separation. So if the bison and the elk were allowed free access, you would see the ranching operations in this valley shut down. And the sad part is you’re sitting on a gold mine of real estate and it would sell for a lot, a lot of money, but what would you have? My guess is not much. (44:29) Open space and that’s the beauty of all this. By doing ranching you provide open space, with open space you have all of the vistas and wildlife, which everyone appreciates. It’s just that you can’t have a lot of diseased animals running around so that brings us back full circle in that you have to control the disease at the source and that’s by cleaning up the Yellowstone Park bison and implementing all the strategies that we talked about that Fish, Wildlife and Parks can do and that’s why that partnership is so important and this far we’re not getting it because politics are getting in the way. The answer cannot just be one-sided; everybody’s got to meet at the table. It’s just really hard to get all parties there with any semblance of science in the equation.

**Druska Kinkie continued**

Now (some ranchers) in the valley prefer the elk to the cattle and they don’t have cattle. Specifically, they’ve opened up their historic ranch lands to elk, for a variety of reasons. They’re usually wealthy land owners from another state. They come and it’s their hunting access, etc. So there’s some of that that takes place. Until you have animals cleaned up you can’t have them together. So that limits all your opportunities. Sure the government would pay you not to ranch, which is basically what they did with the Royal Teton Ranch, the RTR easement that they got through the IBMP. They paid them to take the cattle away so the bison would have that corridor. It happens, but I like cattle ranching. Paying us to not ranch anymore, we’d just as soon move and go ranch somewhere else, which I don’t know how viable that is anymore. You buy another set of problems somewhere else. That would be the outcome I’m afraid, you’d see more and more people leave the valley and ranching all together.

Rich Kinkie - Interesting scenario, hadn’t heard it yet from folks…

Druska - Not perfect, but that at least comes kind of down, opens up further.

Tim - Does your willingness to incriminate the elk put you out of favor with maybe the rest of the state who might see it as a real positive and don’t want the elk branded? When we were talking about this issue I was under the impression anyway that buffalo were getting the brunt of the criticism for carrying the disease. We were also told that the elk population being larger was a big part of the disease, but the finger was not being pointed at the elk because that’s an industry in and of itself that’s also very powerful. You’ve mentioned several times the elk and seldom the buffalo and you admit the elk is your problem. By being vocal about that, does that put you out of favor with the rest of the state? Who again might be willing to point their finger down here and sacrifice you guys with this split state status? Do you really believe that’s going to pass?

Druska - Mm-hmm, I do, because the governor has a lot of the wrong kind of power in my opinion and it’s a fear tactic thing. If you go against the governor you don’t stay around long and I think people like their jobs. The Board of Livestock is appointed by the governor. There’s only two people on a board of five, seven, I don’t know, only two people, and that’s not the majority on this board that are supportive of the cattle industry. I think that politically it’s stacked against us. I think he’ll go forward with it, but whether or not APHIS, which has final approval, will prove it I don’t know.

Tim - Who controls APHIS?

Charlie - USDA.

Druska - That’s right, thank you. It ends up going to Washington and that’s where a lot of the lobbying efforts are being pursued by Montana stock governors and Farm Bureau in Washington with those guys because I think they feel and rightly so, that I don’t think we’re going to be able to control it here at the state and I think (4:34) they’re going to pursue 11 steps of regulatory and legislative things, hoops to jump through to complete the application and then the application goes to Washington. That’s where a lot of the lobbying goes to Washington. That’s where a lot of the lobbying efforts are being put. In answer to your elk question, every cattle producer in the state recognizes that elk is a problem. Whether it’s numbers and damage or numbers and disease, they get it. After this latest outbreak and they’re crossing their Ts and dotting there Is and when it comes out that it’s an elk infection, FWP is really going to feel the heat.

Tim - How will that change things?

Druska - They will be forced to step up and do more of the testing, more of the separation and actually become a partner in the herd plans and helping producers. They will no longer, it will not be allowed to sit on the sidelines anymore.

Tim - Will there be a large outcry to protect the elk? Will there be a lot of input, more so than any of the buffalo? That is a powerful industry here, is it not?

(5:54) Druska - We’re not…well, I think the key is first off you have to find out how infected they are. If you’re looking at a zero prevalence of one to two percent, that’s not a highly infected wildlife population. However, then that’s what kicks in and you have to have that separation. When the elk come down on the valley floor in that February through April time period when hunting seasons are closed, you either have a special hunt, give out the permits, let these people come in and hunt them, or you haze them and you get that separation that you need. I think there are a number of management tools (6:39) that thus far FWP is sitting back and not talking. They will be forced to start enacting. Some of them may not work in certain areas; it’s all going to be a management practice in flux so to speak. We’re not going to know in which areas they infected and not, their migratory habits are. I think that they will have to start taking some responsibility and helping. Right now every time when you talk to FWP about diseased elk they tie it to access and they say if you would let hunters come in and hunt them, we would be able to do more with the numbers to protect cattle. It’s got to go farther than that whole access topic, (7:26) because the majority of the elk on the valley floor are not (there) during the hunting season. We’re a perfect example. We don’t have elk here during the general season. If we did, we would allow hunting and we have when there’s an occasional, but we don’t have that kind of access to them. Access for us is not an issue. When they come in March and April and camp out in your hay field and bring the disease with them, then it’s an issue for us and then FWP needs to come and haze. Or if they wanted they could have a special season, but those are the decisions they have to make and it will depend upon each of their (8:06) management units, which is what they call these elk units – management units – depending on the numbers, their movement patterns and how the affect the ranchers where they’re at.

Tim - Last thing going through my mind, we’re been talking about it for the last few days, and it doesn’t really seem that the disease itself is as bad as the perception of the disease. You can still eat the meat, even though it may be contaminated, from an outsiders point of view other than the status and other burdens that come with the stigma of this area being contaminated, what’s the (8:56) problem with the disease?

Druska - One of the problems that people never even talk about is the human health risk. The dairies in the valley right now are subject to monthly brucellosis test. Before they started pasteurizing the milk and doing dairies differently, you would get ungulent fever and that’s an incredible human health risk. You could get it from the blood of wildlife and vets would get it from time to time. There’s a human health factor that they don’t talk about enough. If the disease became more prevalent, I think you would see more and more infections in (9:45) humans. That’s something to avoid. Take that herd in Daniels. The herds here, we were taking one in the latest herd, I think there were seven in the one in Bridger and no other contact herds had it. But you go to Daniels,Wyoming and they’ve already got over 2 dozen in one herd, that’s going to have far reaching repercussions within adjoining herds and various other places. I think when it gets bad it can decimate an industry.

Charlie - One of the concerns I had is that as you talk about using sound science and the like, science can now tell us (10:34) whether or not or several members of the herd would be contaminated or not from a particular hot animal that has tested positive, did understand that APHIS or the state instructs that the entire herd must be wiped out. This to me seems to be a real contradicting way of doing things when we can in fact test. If testing is part of the process, why do we have to sacrifice the rest of the herd when it may not be contaminated? I’m wondering if there’s any mean by which we can change practices that seems to be more 1950s - 1960s for brucellosis and bring them up to the 21st century. Where we could do away with or deal with the hot animals and leave the rest of the herd intact? Is anyone in your sphere of influence talked about this more modern approach?

(11:42) Druska - They do talk about updating the reactions and the rules and all of that. Part of the problem, well there’s a couple of things; sexual maturity can trigger the disease. You may not know you have it, you may have a young animal and then when they calve it becomes active. That’s one of the inexact parts of testing and knowing if you have it. It can lay dormant in an animal so even in the bison you can have something that’s zero negative and three or four years (12:20) down the road, something triggers it and they became a positive. It’s not that I tested you once, you’re clean and you’re good. Another thing, to test out of a disease, they make you quarantine. When you quarantine you can’t ever leave, most people go to summer pasture, grass, if you quarantine you’d be feeding hay year round. That’s really expensive and maybe you don’t have the sort of facility where you could really do that. Then you have to prove you have biosecurity and that your animals do not ever cross a fence.

Charlie - That’s the post 9/11 issue with brucellosis?

(13:05) Druska - Mm-hmm. And just the disease containment. That was part of the problem with Bridger. They had these animals quarantined but then they broke out because they were hungry. I think the herd was condemned anyway, but that was just an illustration of how hard it is to actually quarantine for any length of time cattle. The grass is always greener on the other side.

? Questioner - I understand the economics of split state status. I’m trying to phrase this the right way. If it stays (13:52) the way it is now and the whole state is deemed as having brucellosis. If it stays as one state, how will that affect the cattle industry in Montana from selling?

Druska - Well it gets confusing because you would assume that people aren’t stupid and they’ll see that Greater Yellowstone has a problem, so we’ll just buy from the north anyway. It’s that actual label that you have to get away from and producers have to step up and take responsibility for making sure they’re clean and that’s what we’re doing with the herd plans. Now the second part of that is you would think that by labeling us an enhanced surveillance area that that’s the same and sometimes it feels like the same because we’re still doing testing, we’re still doing vaccinating, we’re still subject to different regulations, but the difference is if you split the state and put us here separate, you truly have lost the incentive to damage and eliminate the disease in the Greater Yellowstone area. That’s one of the keys, while we’re still considered an enhanced area there’s still a lot of focus on disease elimination and management. If you become a split state then everybody gets this (?) we don’t have to worry because they’re separate (15:49) and that cannot be the way it is. We’ve got to focus on disease management.

? Questioner - If it stays a single state, if more and more cases develop or come about will that lose the incentive to vaccinate and things like that.

Druska - What I think will happen if it continues to be a problem that the cattle industry in Montana as a united group will create such an outcry that all the parties will be forced to come up with better vaccines, eliminate- Yellowstone National Park will be forced because of the public outcry and the pressure to deal more effectively with disease within the park and those are the reasons why you have to keep that focus on disease, on management, on elimination. It cannot be just about sacrificing.

-Brucilli can last for 90 days?

(17:00) Druska - It can. UV is bad for it. Under certain conditions, like if it’s sheltered underneath like a cow pie or something you know, and it has that protection and it’s not super hot, it likes colder weather, it can last for a long time.

(17:23) John- In the week of workshops we had back on campus before coming here and the week here we’ve been talking to people, it seems to me the facts aren’t as clear as I has assumed they would be. I guess I came in to this thinking in this day and age with all the research that we do that the facts would be pretty clearly known, and there would be difference of opinion in terms of values and things that people want. I don’t think that’s true anymore. The information that we get everywhere we go seems to differ. The information presented as facts is different at places. Is there a group in the area that’s really working on what are really the facts that everybody can take as given and then we can argue over what to do with those facts?

(18:35) Druska - Well, actually, I think that…

John- Can I? Through these two weeks I think we have probably read more and heard more than most people, and I’m confused. (laughter)

Druska- Yeah.

Charlie- John’s often confused.

Tim- Or confusing

Druska- I think that for the most part, truly the lobbying groups of Farm Bureau and Stockgrowers (19:03) have good facts. The part where it kind of gets confusing is the emotional part of all the animals, what we’re doing to different groups of animals, then it all gets skewed. It’s pretty straightforward. We have infected bison, we have infected elk. We have a vaccine that’s not super effective, but it’s a tool and we have separation, which is a tool. Other than that, as an industry and as a park those are the things we have to work with. The nuances of how you go about working together are what really create a lot of the turmoil, I think. And you’re going to have the extremes. The Buffalo Field Campaign, they’re charged with protecting buffalo. What’s happened to the bison/buffalo this winter, spring, I’m sure has just, they’re distraught. But from our perspective the park knew how many numbers they had, they knew what was sustainable. What should be pretty straightforward becomes emotional issues. I think if you put the science in, try to stay factual and keep the emotion out, you get farther. The politics have got to leave.

(20:48)?

(21:00) you guys are going to pay the price for it, we’ll move on to the split state status, you really don’t think there will be a more push for science and funding maybe through Homeland Security though APHIS?

Druska- I think a combination of things are going to happen. Ironically our local vet has been president of the Montana Vet Association and they just had their yearly meeting this past week. What he wanted to see happen, by the way the Montana Vet Association is against split-state status, and they wrote the governor that last year. They took another vote this year and he said it was still unanimous, they were still against it. What they’re proposing is they create a task force of Montana vets, Wyoming vets, Idaho vets and they’re going to meet in August he said and they’re going to try to come up with science based ideas on how to deal with what’s going on because you’ve got the feed grounds in Wyoming which are reintroducing brucellosis to everything there. Idaho just got cleaned up and they have a feed ground. We don’t have a feed ground, but we just lost our status. They’re going to have to start analyzing a lot of things. The comment he made to me yesterday was (22:23) “we wanted to do this task force, come together, do science and we want to leave the politics out of it.” Well, good luck is what I’ve got to say because I think it’s really going to be tough. I truly believe unless something comes out of Washington that I don’t know about, I truly believe at the Board of Livestock in July they will vote to go forward with split state status and I think we’re in trouble. I wish it wasn’t so. We tried really hard to be proactive and do something to protect ourselves. We bought some time, but that’s all we got. I think if they prove without a doubt that this was an elk infection this second time there will be more pressure brought to bear on FWP. Maybe that will make a difference, maybe it won’t. The lobbyists of Stockgrowers and Farm Bureau are trying very, very hard to support the cattle industry and I think we just have to hope that by going to Washington and having discussions that they have with USDA and APHIS that it gets us somewhere.

(23:39) So your Montana governor’s a rancher?

Druska - He says he is.

--So he owns cattle and land?

Druska - His family was in ranching – North Central.

Brad - Let’s assume the positive side for you and they don’t go split state status, what is this really going to entail now that Montana’s lost the brucellosis free standing for you since you have a herd plan, you have these other things? What else do you have to do in the next several months in the whole process, what will you go through?

(24:40) Druska - No split state, we’ll follow our herd plan. Our herd plan says that in December after we’ve shipped our calves in October and we get all of our cows back out of the mountains and back here, we will test everything. God willing, that test will be negative and we won’t have any reactions. We’ll go through our calving cycle and in March ’09 we will adult vaccinate everything.

 Brad - And you will be allowed to ship these cattle to market just like in years past?

Druska - The calves, mm-hmm. Most of anything else we ship goes to slaughter. It’s not selling to someone else for breeding purposes type-thing. When they’re sold for slaughter out of here they have to go to a federally inspected plant, which is (25:35) out of state, but slaughter rules vary. Most of the time, these animals get tested anyway, in the course of the slaughter. The problem they sometimes run into is they lose ear tags, back tags, etc. and even if they find a hot one, they’re not quite sure where it came from. That was one of the pressures for doing your plans and testing, because the sooner you catch it, the closer to home you catch it, the less chance there is of the disease getting widespread, which worked perfectly, not for the rancher, but worked perfectly in the case of disease recognition on this one.

John- I’m a city boy. What portion of your revenue comes from shipping calves and what portion comes from shipping mature animals for slaughter?

Druska - 90% of our income come from calves, that’s what we do, is feeder calves. We expose everything here to artificial insemination so we don’t run nearly as many bulls as some commercial operations that just use bulls. We don’t have a large bull contingent that we roll over every year. Your cull cows are ones that usually come open in the fall for whatever reason. Open meaning not pregnant when your pregnancy test that number varies from year to year. We just don’t have a huge population that we sell for slaughter.

(27:20)

(28:29) Unintelligible question

(28:41) Druska- We in particular have not, meaning our small group here. I know that there’s ongoing conversations with Stockgrowers and the Park Service. We have another fella from Beaver Head County, he runs in both Idaho and Montana and he’s been a part of this process. He’s had conversations. I don’t know with specific groups, but I know that the door has been opened. Personally we have not.

-Would you be willing to?

Druska- Yeah. There are extremes on all sides and I’m a little scared of the Buffalo Field Campaign (29:45) (laughter) but, you know, if there’s something a little bit more in the middle, sure.

Basically there’s a lot of distrust too, and part the propaganda rumor mill and you don’t know what ulterior motives are out there. There’s a faction out there I think that believes if split state status was invoked and this area basically in our opinion sacrificed and disease is not an issue that opens the door for the park. There are people who want more space for the bison. That feeds right into what they want so they’re for split-state status. It’s hard to know who to bring together that has some common values and goals, I think its not that producers aren’t willing to talk and it’s not that Great Yellowstone Coalition or Northern Resource Council aren’t interested in coming together, it’s a really hard scary thing to do. I know when we were initially fighting split-state status, I talked to Dennis Glick of the Senora Institute, I talked to the American’s Farmland Trust in Washington, I talked to our local Park County Environmental Council, who by the way said they don’t get political. The point that I tried to make to those groups is open space is valuable and it’s incredibly important not to lose that, not that you have to rubber stamp (32:08) everything ranching does, but in this particular case we can’t lose ranchers and split state status will cause a loss of ranching. I encouraged them to get involved, learn about the issue and be supportive of ranching if they could. That was the message I gave when I talked to those people.

(32:37) –What percentage is Montana cattle of the industry in the United States?

Druska- I don’t know what. (looks at husband, Rich) Do you now what percentage of Montana are the entire national cattle industry?

-Don’t know

-It is pretty big.

…

Unintelligible … darting elk and collaring, blood tested them. Out of 30, these were migratory park elk, out of these 30, 2 I believe had brucellosis…

 Other part of science issue, if FWP is going to come in and get elk, they’re going to dart 30, ok, and 30 out of how many? Is that a statistically representative sample? Do you have any kind of confidence in what that value’s going to be? You talk about getting data. Each of these management units have x number of elk and we have a friend over on the other side of the river, he has no problem with them coming in to get data, he encourages it, but he said that I don’t want you to just get 10 and say that’s a good sample. If I’ve got 5 hot ones in 10 giving me a 50% brucellosis rate. What he was trying to stress is you’ve got to get a big enough sample that it is representative of what we have. FWP’s not very good at that because it’s hard to do. It takes a lot of time and it takes a lot of money, and they are continually strapped for money. That’s why they’ll tell you they can’t go in and get samples. It’s also a real disservice to anyone looking for real scientific data to think that it’s realistic and reliable.

-Where are they getting their money from? Is it through the government?

Druska- They get it mostly through hunting fees- fishing licenses…and I suppose there are appropriations through the legislature on a yearly basis.

Brad- It sounds like a good research project for some professor to undertake maybe at Indiana State.

(36:33) Charlie- That does raise a very interesting point about finding data and getting accurate samples, it takes a lot of money, a lot of human resources and a lot of time.

Druska- Ironically, it costs a lot of money to get bad data. They do all these blood samples; give out all these test tube kits, postage paid back to them, $5 a kit, if you test it, it’s a good enough sample. They had #s of how many of these kits they had gotten back and were bad thousands of dollars. There’s got to be some other way to invest your money that’s more reliable.

Charlie- I liked your idea of the check station…Many states tried to do wildlife study, when we left it to the hunter, we have failed and this is nationwide, not just this particular venue. Check station and you have a trained individual that is there, yes there’s a curtain.

(37:47) Druska- Hopefully they’ll try doing the check stations until they figure out how to do the trapping that is more effective.

?- Are there any other contributing factors that may cause harm to your cattle that may be more significant than this buffalo and elk bacteria problem?

(38:17) Rich- We have every day problems.

Druska- Seasonal basis for calving, you’ve always got scours and you deal with that. You’ve always got pneumonia and you deal with that. We deal with diphtheria, we deal with foot rot, all those illnesses that cattle get, and we deal with it. We know what we’re dealing with; we know how to treat it. We take care of it. We do stringent vaccinating with modified live viruses at all the times you’re supposed to; we do all the right stuff. Then there’s a whole host of things that you have no control over and you deal with that.

(39:05) Rich- But the difference is each one of those issues will not take out the whole herd and brucellosis will do that instantly. When you have as many years invested in breeding cattle herd, they’re not just a commodity that you could go out and replace.

(39:21) Druska- Yeah, I don’t think I could survive having to depopulate the entire herd. To the distress of my husband I make everything into pets. You’ve got cows that (I) just know and you walk out there and they walk up to you, I don’t know how you get rid of animals like that. I asked in a meeting, this was a couple of years ago when they were talking about it, why do we pick words like depopulate when in reality we are slaughtering an entire herd. We nice it up by calling it depopulation and I find that very objectionable, call it like it is.

(40:16) Rich- Cows are depopulated, bison are slaughtered.

(40:20) Druska- Yeah, isn’t that ironic. It takes the bite out of it. People don’t understand that a couple in Bridger lost everything, everything. I don’t know how you do that.

-Has the wolf been a problem, the reintroduction of the wolf?

(40:46) Druska- Other than it changed the migratory habitats of the elk, and then we ended up with none of them. Occasionally they’re in and out. We don’t- I think the one pack we had on us a couple of years ago in our summer pasture, they didn’t bother the cattle, but then they went down a little bit lower and got into somebody’s sheep and they ended up being depopulated…Occasionally they come through. They try and kill the mangy ones. There’s (not) a lot of mange anymore. One they killed down here Spring Creek after a month of trying. It was pretty mangy.

…you worry about it.

Question- Number of buffalo, if it got down, would it ease your fears?

(42:28) Druska- In the Interagency Bison Management Plan that’s where the 3,000 number is as what is the sustainable amount. As far as how they get their numbers, that’s where it depends on who you talk to. I think they do flight and count, but the parks number is usually lower than anyone else’s number so you kind of take an in between, but I think there was a reasonably accurate count of at least 4,700 at one point this year…

 I think the problem is similar to the elk. The wolves may not be pushing the elk today or tomorrow, but their migratory pattern is set so they’re coming this way… I think the same way with the bison. They know to migrate out of the park and across those feed grounds no matter what the numer is.

… The pressure is different and that is significant. It’s certainly much easier to deal with 500 head of migrating bison versus 1,500 head, but if it’s a diseased animal, it’s a diseased animal and the numbers can’t direct the disease management. You still have to get that under control.

-Show the bison to cattle?

(44:37) Druska- The only reason it hasn’t been shown out in the wild is because they keep them separate. At Texas A&M they have done the bison-cattle transmission and we practice religiously spatial separation and that’s why it’s not happening and delayed turnout onto federal lands.