

Name _____



How Does a Bison Reproduce?

Bison are fascinating animals with unique reproductive behaviors. Bison reproduce through a natural process that begins with a mating season, which usually takes place in the summer, from July to September. During this time, male bison, called bulls, compete with one another for the chance to mate with female bison, called cows. Bulls will often

display their strength by bellowing loudly, wallowing in the dirt, and engaging in head-butting contests with other males.

Once a male has successfully mated with a female, the gestation period begins. The gestation period for a bison lasts about 9 months, similar to that of humans. This means the calves are usually born in the spring when food is more abundant, which helps the young bison grow strong and healthy.

A female bison typically gives birth to a single calf, although twins are very rare. The newborn calf is small compared to its parents and weighs around 30-70 pounds at birth. It has a reddish-brown coat, which helps it blend into the grasslands for protection. The calf is able to stand and walk within a few hours of being born, allowing it to keep up with the herd for safety.

Bison mothers are very protective of their young. They keep their calves close and nurse them for several months. During this time, the mother helps the calf learn how to graze and stay safe within the herd. The calves start to eat grass along with their mother's milk after a few weeks. By the time they are about one year old, they are mostly independent but may stay with the herd for protection.

The care provided by bison mothers helps ensure the survival of their calves. The herd also plays a role in keeping the young safe, as many adult bison will help protect calves from predators like wolves.