

If you are cycling

- If bison are not on or close to the road, you likely won't have an issue cycling by.
- Try to avoid surprising bison, especially if they are on or close to the road. Make some noise when approaching so they know you're there. Shouting and hand clapping may work, or not, but an air horn is hard to ignore. Give them some time to become aware of your presence and they'll likely move off as you approach.
- If there is a herd on the road, and if there is a vehicle handy, try to bunch all the cyclists in a peloton and have the vehicle slowly lead the way through the herd.
- When approaching a herd make sure they are aware of your presence. A surprised bison may panic and run over a cyclist. A bison may also move suddenly in an unexpected direction due to a social interaction between animals.
- Lone bulls: give them space and go around. Try to get their attention so they know you're there. Just remember, they may not move off.
- If you're cycling alone, move to the opposite side of the road and use a car as an escort if possible.

If you are on foot

- Give bison their space- stay at least 100 metres away. Give them even more space during the rut or if you notice a bison is agitated.
- Be aware of how close you are to bison so that you don't startle them.
- Have an escape plan when close to bison and identify potential protective cover nearby (e.g. trees, vehicle).
- If you find yourself too close to a bison, do not run. Instead, back away slowly.
- Never enter a herd of bison on foot or come between two animals, especially a cow and her calf.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times as they can agitate bison and provoke attacks.

SAFETY IN BISON COUNTRY

What should I do if I hit a bison with my vehicle?

Contact a Renewable Resource Officer as soon as possible if you hit a big game animal with your vehicle. Reporting collisions with big game is required by the NWT *Wildlife Act*. Officers will determine if any of the meat can be salvaged and shared with local communities.

Environment and Climate Change Offices

Report all big game wildlife collisions to

1-866-762-2437 or call:

Fort Smith	867-872-6400 Emergency number: 867-872-0400 (May to September)
Hay River	Emergency number: 867-872-7640 (May to September)
Fort Providence	867-699-3002
Behchokq (Rae-Edzo)	867-392-6511
Yellowknife	867-767-9238 ext. 53247 Emergency number: 867-446-2073
Fort Liard	867-770-4300
Fort Simpson	867-695-7450 Emergency number: 867-695-7433 (May to September)

For more information on wood bison in the NWT,
visit www.gov.nt.ca/ecc.

For more information on driving safety in the NWT,
visit www.inf.gov.nt.ca.

Government of
Northwest Territories



SAFETY IN BISON COUNTRY





Bison in the NWT

Wood bison are an important historical component of the boreal ecosystem, but unfortunately motor vehicle accidents continue to be a major mortality factor.

Bison are unpredictable and can run three times faster than humans. During the July- September mating season (rut) bulls are more aggressive and may pose an increased danger.

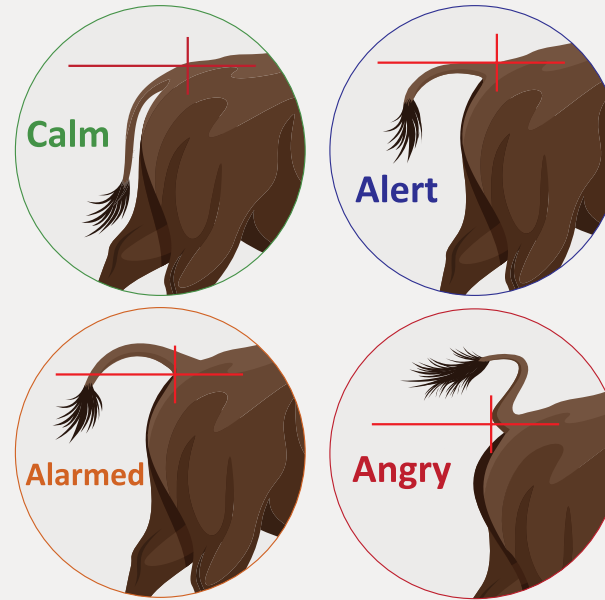
Warning Signs

Bison are very unpredictable animals and every encounter is unique; there is no single strategy that will work in every situation. Be alert and aware of the following signs:

- Snorting and tossing its head.
- Raising its tail.
- Turning its back to you, raising its tail and defecating.
- Pawing at the ground.
- False charge may occur. Do not run.
- Twigs and small branches in the hair on the head can indicate that the bison is aggressive.

When a bison feels threatened, its tail can tell you just how threatened the animal feels. When encountering a bison, keep an eye on its back-end, it can help you indicate the likelihood of an attack.

A bison's tail might indicate if the animal is calm, alert, alarmed or angry (unless the animal is relieving itself):



If you are driving

The most dangerous time for collisions with bison is August through November, especially along the following highways:

- Highway 3 – Fort Providence to Yellowknife.
- Highway 5 – Fort Smith to Big Buffalo Junction.
- Highway 7 – Poplar River to British Columbia border.

From January 2018 to December 2023, 124 bison were killed on NWT highways. Collisions with bison cause damage and injuries every year. A bison can weigh up to 1,000 kg. Colliding with an animal that size can cause a lot of damage to a vehicle. Most collisions happen at night or in low visibility conditions.

- Slow down at night and when visibility is poor to avoid collisions.
- If you see a group of bison standing on or near the road, SLOW DOWN, and if necessary, STOP. Bison can quickly run out of the ditch and onto the road. It takes a vehicle 100 metres to stop when driving 100 km/h.
- Stay in your vehicle and do not approach bison on foot along the roadside.
- Never park on the road or block traffic. Use pullouts to watch wildlife and let other vehicles pass. Stay with your vehicle if you encounter a herd of bison on the roadway.
- Most collisions with bison occur when visibility is poor, especially at night between August and November.
- Approach slowly; honking your horn may encourage bison to move off the road.
- Wear your seat belt.
- Use high beams, when safe.

