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TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE ~~FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE~~  
SB 337

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee my name is Chuck Rein. I am here today to represent my ranching interests in Sweet Grass County. I spent several years as Chairman of the Montana Stockgrowers Association Landowner/ Recreation/Wildlife committee. I am familiar with the divisive nature of many landowner/sportsman issues. I speak in favor of SB 337.

The subject of brucellosis is likely to appear in the mass media any given day, especially in Montana. Landowners, especially those who live in Area 1, the seven counties adjacent to Yellowstone National Park, are keenly aware of the increased testing requirements necessary before we sell or even move our cattle out of the area. If the Department of Livestock deems my operation as high risk, meaning my cattle run in close proximity to brucellosis infected elk, my testing requirements become onerous at best and unbearable at worst. If indeed my cattle are infected with brucellosis I will probably have to slaughter my whole herd of cattle.

If bison were easily captured, handled, and vaccinated we probably would not have a bison herd in Yellowstone National Park that tests 67% sero-positive in breeding age females. If bison could be handled as easily as domestic cattle Montana would likely be considered brucellosis free.

Other states that import Montana cattle to feed or breed are looking closely to see how we manage our livestock and wild game given our current loss of brucellosis free status. By enacting SB 337 we offer assurance to our customers that we are doing everything in our power to contain the spread of brucellosis.

Montana is having enough trouble managing the bison herds we now have. Lets not open ourselves to more risk by allowing bison to be spread around the state. I urge you to support SB 337. Thank You.