

KIMBALL RANCH AN AGRITOURISM DRAW

Over at Rocky Hollow Buffalo Co. on the Monkey Ranch north of Kimball, buffalo meat sales are supplemented with another revenue maker.

Agritourism.

It's a part of Nebraska's tourism industry that the state – and ranch – actively promote.

The ranch with 153 bison on 3,000 acres has been a tourist destination for three years now -- a modest one to be sure, but a destination nonetheless.

"We've had everything from a bus of 52 people to two people visit," ranch owner Rick Forepaugh said. "Everyone's really fascinated with the native buffalo."

The ranch, 11 miles north of Kimball along state Highway 71, already welcomed six agritourism visitors this year

Jim Orr
Western Nebraska Observer

through the first half of January and has tour reservations scheduled as far ahead as May so far. Last year, Forepaugh said, 40 to 50 people took the tour.

The latest were four tourists from Illinois, who visited the area over a January weekend after contacting the ranch via Facebook on a Friday night. They toured the ranch that Sunday and stayed two days in the area.

The \$10 tours typically take about 90 minutes. Forepaugh and his wife, Lindsay, guide visitors around the short-grass prairie to see bison up close at ground level or from a pickup. The tourists see how the ani-

mals are handled and have the opportunity to hand-feed them alfalfa treats.

"The time goes real fast," Forepaugh said.

The visitors tend to be from urban areas and want that experience of seeing a buffalo ranch out in the country. They have come from as far as Rochester, N.Y.

"I think it's a good thing," Forepaugh said of the tours. "I think there's a lot of disconnect with the urban people and the rural lifestyle."

Most visitors connect with the Monkey Ranch online at Facebook, but the tours also are promoted on the Visit Nebraska website.

"State tourism representatives visited and gave us a bit of a buzz" in terms of publicity,

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