

AGRITOURISM

Forepaugh said.

At the state level, the Nebraska Tourism Commission places “a lot of emphasis on agritourism,” commission spokeswoman Erin Lenz said.

She noted that the staff employs a full-time agritourism consultant, Karen Kollars, and conducts an annual Agri/Eco Tourism Workshop (see story on Page 13) that attracts attendees representing agritourism and ecotourism statewide. Nebraska agritourism offerings include breweries, wineries, dude ranches, orchards, farms and more.

Lenz said Nebraska Tourism has no infor-



Bison graze near Rocky Hollow Buffalo Co. buildings on the Monkey Ranch north of Kimball. The animals at the ranch have become an agritourism attraction.

mation on how much money agritourism specifically brings into the state or, for that matter, the Panhandle. However, enough data exists to indicate that the amount is sub-

stantial and Nebraska agritourism is on the rise.

Consider that tourism is Nebraska's third largest industry and, according to the U.S. Travel Association's

Impact of Travel and State Economies Report in 2016, travelers to Nebraska generated \$731.5 million at the local, state and federal levels and created 49,360 jobs.

Then there's this information from 2004: Nebraska that year welcomed 19.6 million travelers who spent \$2.9 billion on overnight stays at least 100 miles from home, ac-

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cording to the “Nebraska Travel and Tourism Facts” report from the Department of Economic Development.

Beyond those enticing numbers, the Monkey Ranch reaches out to the growing number of health-minded consumers as a cornerstone of its operation and agritourism outreach.

The ranch is holistically managed, raising only grass-fed buffalo. No antibiotics or hormones are used. Individual steaks and fully processed animals that the ranch sells are USDA processed and inspected. The meat also is vacuum sealed for freshness.

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