

PATCHES OF PRAIRIE

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How Things Change on the Prairie (and Yet Remain the Same)

About a year ago in May of 2001 a bison calf was orphaned on Konza Prairie. This was not an unusual event. Calves can become separated from their mothers. If this happens before they have recognized each other's voices and smells, the calf may be left to fend for itself. Occasionally the calf will die; other times, a lucky calf may be rescued by the Konza staff. If the calf is healthy, the decision may be made to try to raise it by hand-feeding.

Such was also the case five years ago in 1996. You may have heard the story of Buffy. She was raised by Dr. Hartnett's daughters on many buckets of milk. Buffy remembered her human friends long after rejoining the herd and would come to the fence to be recognized. She gave us a calf when she was four years old and another at five. Late this winter, Buffy wandered into that great prairie in the sky. We don't know why she died. Death and change are constant on the prairie.

The new orphan from 2001 was also hand-fed by the Konza staff. Daisy is almost a year old now and she is healthy and growing fast. Daisy has an outgoing personality. She loves people and will come running whenever someone walks by. She grunts and runs and plays like any young bison. But her happiness is especially displayed for her human friends. The other day, as I walked up the trail to check for wildflowers on Butterfly Hill, I heard

the galloping of hooves and the special grunts of a young bison running up behind me. She came to a skidding halt at the fence and poked her nose through for a quick scratch. We talked awhile and then she went shooting off at her fastest speed, bounded into the air from all fours and with a half turn raced back to me again. It happened so quickly and with so much power and grace, I was amazed. We are lucky to have a friend like Daisy to give us joy in our lives.



Daisy, the new orphan bison calf from 2001, enjoys a visit from Marley Evans.