

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease found in elk and bison throughout the area surrounding Yellowstone in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. The disease has essentially been eliminated in cattle, but infected elk and wild bison pose a continuing threat. Hunters are crucial to help stakeholders monitor spread and possible management actions aimed at controlling the disease.

Beginning in 2018, in effort to thank elk hunters and potentially increase return of blood samples and associated harvest information, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department offered a raffle of high-quality outdoor gear at the end of each season. All prizes were generously provided by sponsors, including an ongoing collaboration between Maven Optics and WY-TWS for a set of binoculars. In all three years of the raffle, the binoculars have rounded out a list of prizes including rifles, spotting scopes, and hooded sweatshirts.

“The raffle is one way we encourage hunters to submit blood samples to help Game and Fish monitor brucellosis in Wyoming,” said Eric Maichak, Game and Fish disease biologist and WY-TWS past-president. “We’ve continued to see an increase each year in the proportion of samples returned by successful hunters despite fewer kits being mailed to hunters since the first year of the raffle in 2018. Thank you to WY-TWS and all sponsors who provided the prizes, to Game and Fish for extensively marketing the prizes and sponsors, and to each hunter who submitted a sample. You truly make a difference for the health of wildlife.”