

Turner bid for Yellowstone bison draws protest

By Matthew Brown
Associated Press

BOZEMAN, Mont. — Ted Turner's bid to get 74 wild bison from Yellowstone National Park is drawing stiff opposition from those who say the animals are being given up for private profit instead of conservation.

Turner has offered to take the animals at the request of Montana's Democratic Gov. Brian Schweitzer. Federal officials earlier warned that the animals faced slaughter if no home was found.

Turner is a longtime champion of bison conservation and owns an estimated 50,000 of the animals across the West. But rising criticism over his latest plan is putting the media mogul in an awkward position. His representatives insist he cannot take the animals without getting something in return.

Turner would keep the bison five years and then return them to the state. As compensation, Turner would keep 90 percent of the animals' offspring, meaning he would gain an estimated 190 bison from a herd prized for its genetic purity.

Some conservationists — plus a group representing dozens of Indian tribes — insist the animals should not be privatized or commercialized. At a Thursday public hearing over the Turner proposal, they said the bison belong on public or tribal lands. That's what state and federal officials had promised over the last several years.

"You're not being true to your commitment not to commercialize these animals," said Glenn Hockett with the Gallatin Wildlife Association.

The animals are now in disease quarantine just outside Yellowstone. They are part of a 5-year program to divert some park bison from the periodic slaughter the animals face, part of efforts to prevent the spread of the disease brucellosis to cattle.

Prior attempts to relocate quarantined bison failed.

Russell Miller with Turner Enterprises said keeping most of their offspring would be necessary to offset the cost of keeping 74 animals for the state for five years.

"We thought there was an emergency," Miller said after Thursday's hearing. "We're not a philanthropy. We're trying to create a blend between conservation and commercialization."

Public comment on the proposal ends Jan. 12. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director Joe Maurier will then have the final say on the fate of the quarantined bison.

The state is also considering sending 14 more bison to Guernsey State Park in southeastern Wyoming.

Some of the Guernsey animals' offspring could be sold after five years, Ken McDonald with Fish, Wildlife and Parks said. But that commercial prospect has gone largely unnoticed by critics of the bison relocation effort, who have focused their ire on Turner.

The 2006 decision approving the quarantine program stated "the bison will remain wild and noncommercial." Opponents of the Turner plan have pinned their complaints on those words and similar statements from state and federal officials.

McDonald acknowledged the state could have come up with a better plan for the animals years ago, but said there is now little choice. He said they need to be moved by the end of March to make room for a second round of about 80 quarantined bison.

"I know we can be criticized for, 'We should have done this 5 years ago,'" McDonald said. "Where we are today is, we've got these bison and we've got to find somewhere" to put them.

Despite warnings of slaughter if a new home for the bison is not found soon, a U.S. Department of Agriculture representative, Ryan Clarke, said that slaughter was not imminent. Clarke noted the bison have been in quarantine for years and could remain longer if needed.

Do you have a thyroid condition?

By Dr. Naser Jamal
Solano Coalition for Better Health

The thyroid gland secretes hormones that are essential to controlling metabolism. If the gland produces too much (hyperthyroidism) or too little (hypothyroidism) of these hormones, health problems will arise.

Both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism are very common and treatable. Roughly one in five women will have a thyroid issue at some point in her life. These conditions can develop at any time, but they often develop after a woman gives birth.

How is a thyroid condition diagnosed?

Both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism are diagnosed through a simple blood test. While sudden and drastic change in thyroid function is possible, a progressive decline in function is more common. Your doctor may order a blood test if he or she suspects a thyroid condition.

There seems to be a genetic link to thyroid problems, so let your doctor know if you have relatives with thyroid issues or dia-



betes. If you have a thyroid issue, other glands in your body — such as those that produce estrogen, testosterone or insulin — may also stop functioning properly.

What are the signs of hypothyroidism? How is it treated?

Potential symptoms include weight gain, being tired despite getting enough rest, depression, constipation and a change in hair texture. Left untreated, a thyroid problem could lead to swelling (edema), carpal tunnel syndrome, sleep apnea, dementia or congestive heart failure.

Hypothyroidism is treated with a daily pill that contains a synthetic hormone. You will need to take this medication for life because your body does not naturally produce enough hormone.

Your doctor will also perform blood tests once or twice a year to confirm that your hormone dosage is still working.

What are the signs of hyperthyroidism? How is it treated?

Potential symptoms include feeling hot all the time, losing weight without trying, loose bowel movements, feeling anxious or irritable, and a change in hair texture. People with long-standing hyperthyroidism may develop an irreversible bulging of the eyes or irregular heart rhythms. Left untreated, hyperthyroidism can lead to worsened asthma, tremors, diarrhea, and even congestive heart failure.

Several disorders can cause hyperthyroidism, making it more difficult to treat than hypothyroidism. In many cases, medication will control the condition. But in some instances, surgery to remove part or all of the thyroid gland may be needed.

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Courtesy Photo

Dubai opens half-mile-high tower, world's tallest

By Adam Schreck
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Dubai opened the world's tallest skyscraper Monday in a blaze of fireworks, then added a final flourish: It renamed the half-mile-high tower for the head of neighboring Abu Dhabi, whose billions bailed out Dubai amid last year's financial crisis.

Long known as Burj Dubai — Arabic for "Dubai Tower" — the building rises 2,717 feet (828 meters) from the desert. The \$1.5 billion "vertical city" of luxury apartments and offices and a hotel designed by Giorgio Armani also plans to have the world's highest mosque (158th floor) and swimming pool (76th floor).

Thousands of cheering, clapping spectators watched as a tally projected on huge screens at the opening ceremony revealed the tower's most closely guarded secret — its height of 2,717 feet. That made it more than 1,000 feet higher than the skyscraper known as Taipei 101 in Taiwan, which at 1,667 feet had been the world's tallest since 2004.

Developers say they are confident in the safety of the tower, which is nearly twice the height of New York's Empire State Building.

Greg Sang, Emaar's director of projects, said the Burj Khalifa has "refuge floors" at 25 to 30 story

intervals that are more fire resistant and have separate air supplies in case of emergency. Its reinforced concrete structure, he said, makes it stronger than steel-frame skyscrapers.

"A plane won't be able to slice through the Burj like it did through the steel columns of the World Trade Center," he said.

The tower was designed by Chicago-based Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, which has a long track record in engineering some of the world's tallest buildings, including the Willis Tower.

Emaar's Alabbar said the landmark Burj is 90 percent sold in a mix of residential units, offices and other space, offering a counterpoint to Dubai's financial woes.

At their peak, some apartments in the Burj were selling for more than \$1,900 per square foot, although they now can go for less than half that, said Heather Wiperman Amiji, chief executive of Dubai real estate consultancy Investment Boutique.

Amiji said some buyers may struggle to find tenants at going rates once the tower's expected high service charges are factored in.

The building ranks as the world's tallest structure, beating out a television mast in North Dakota.

Work began in 2004 and moved

rapidly. At times, new floors were being added almost every three days. During the busiest construction periods, some 12,000 people worked at the tower each day, according to Emaar. Low-wage migrant workers from the Indian subcontinent provided much of the muscle.

The Burj is the centerpiece of a 500-acre development that officials hope will become a new central residential and commercial district in this sprawling and often disconnected city. It is flanked by dozens of smaller but new skyscrapers and the Middle East's largest shopping mall.

That layout — as the core of a lower-rise skyline — lets the Burj stand out prominently against the horizon. It is visible across dozens of miles of rolling sand dunes outside Dubai. From the air, the spire appears as an almost solitary, slender needle.

An observation deck on the 124th floor opens to the public Tuesday, with adult tickets starting at 100 dirhams, or just over \$27 apiece. The ride to the top took just over a minute during a visit for journalists Monday.

The Burj itself cast a sundial-like shadow over low-rise houses and empty sand-covered lots stretching toward the azure Persian Gulf.

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