



## **Controlling Prairie Dogs: Suggestions For Minimizing Risk To Non-Target Wildlife Species**

This document provides information and guidance to applicators of rodenticides and users of concussive devices for prairie dog control to aid in minimizing the potential for incidental take of non-target wildlife species. The following suggestions are intended to assist these users in determining the presence of non-target wildlife species and minimizing any possible risk to them.

**These suggestions do not preclude or override any applicable state or federal laws. Applicators must read, understand and follow the directions for the use of registered rodenticides or concussive devices. It remains the responsibility of the applicator/device user to appropriately select and use products in accordance with licensing requirements, label restrictions and any other applicable state or federal law.**

### **1. Consult with wildlife agencies**

Applicators should consult with the Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if federal or state endangered or threatened species or species of special concern may be present in the area proposed for treatment. Some prairie dog rodenticides require applicators to contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to beginning the process of application. If at any point in the treatment process, it is determined that endangered or threatened species or species of special concern may be present, treatment-related activity should be postponed until further guidance is provided by the appropriate wildlife agency.

### **2. Inspect area prior to treatment**

While a variety of wildlife species may use the general area, efforts to minimize possible risk to non-target species should focus on those wildlife species that are likely to come in direct contact with the selected rodenticide or inhabit a burrow to which a concussive device may be applied. Since different rodenticides pose different threats to different species, the presence of non-target wildlife species should be considered when selecting the control method. For example, possible risk to grain-eating non-target wildlife may be reduced by using fumigants rather than treated baits when those species are present.

Any attempt to determine the presence of non-target wildlife species should include an interview with the landowner or site manager, as well as at least one on-site inspection. The applicator should ask what wildlife species have been observed, when during the day and year (some non-target wildlife species may only make seasonal use of the area in question) they were observed, how frequently they were observed and whether the landowner or site manager is aware of the presence of any federal or state endangered or threatened species or species of special concern. A companion document describes survey protocol for the detection and protection of nesting burrowing owls.

Sightings and evidence of the presence of non-target wildlife species can be influenced by time of day, time of year, weather and disturbance. Applicators should take those factors into account

when scheduling their site visits. Any additional rodenticide label requirements regarding pre-application site visits must also be complied with, including, but not limited to, any requirement for multiple site visits prior to application.

Pre-baiting prior to the use of treated baits provides an additional opportunity for applicators to determine if non-target wildlife species are present.

A site inspection should include consideration of evidence of the presence and use of burrows by prairie dogs, as well as evidence of the presence of non-target wildlife species such as recent tracks, scat, pellets, feathers, burrow type, calls, etc.

- Fresh Scat Applicators should determine if scat near or in the burrow is that of prairie dogs. Prairie dog scat is 3/4 – 1 1/4” long, light colored to brown, and composed of fresh or dried plant material. If other scat is present, a non-target wildlife species may be using that burrow.
- Fresh Tracks Applicators should determine if tracks near or in the burrow are those of prairie dogs. Wildlife field guides should be used to identify tracks of prairie dogs and non-target wildlife species. If tracks other than prairie dogs are present, a non-target wildlife species may be using that burrow.
- Burrows Applicators should determine if the burrow is being actively used by prairie dogs. Prairie dog burrows show dirt mounded up around the entrances, 3-5” in diameter with single or multiple entrances. Evidence of modifications to a prairie dog burrow, such as enlargements or different excavation patterns, may indicate that other non-target wildlife species may be using the burrow.

### **3. Application of Prairie Dog Rodenticides or Use of Concussive Devices**

Applicators should not apply prairie dog rodenticide or use a concussive device in any burrow that does not show evidence of active use by prairie dogs. Inactive prairie dog burrows or burrows that show evidence of use by other non-target wildlife species should not be treated by either method.

**Note: It is the responsibility of the applicator to read and follow the label directions for the specific rodenticide being used. Failure to do so is a violation of state and federal laws.**

Rodenticide labels also provide specific information about avoiding incidental poisoning of threatened or endangered species.

### **4. Post-Application Site Visit**

Applicators should conduct a post-application site inspection of all treated areas to determine efficacy of the treatment for prairie dogs and possible impact to non-target wildlife species. Any take of non-target wildlife species should be reported to the Division of Wildlife.

*revised 03/2007*

See also ["Recommended Survey Protocol and Actions to Protect Nesting Burrowing Owls When Conducting Prairie Dog Control", Colorado Division of Wildlife 03/2007](#)