



ALBERTA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Minister Patty Hajdu
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6
Patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca

May 1, 2020

RE: Ban on use of strychnine to control Richardson's ground squirrels

Dear Honourable Minister Hajdu:

The Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) is a non-profit organization representing over 400 wildlife professionals in the Province of Alberta. Our mission is to inspire and empower wildlife professionals to engage in science-based management and conservation of wild animals and their habitats. We are affiliated with The Wildlife Society, the largest organizations of wildlife professionals in the world.

We are writing to commend you on the decision to ban 2% strychnine for control of Richardson's ground squirrel (RGS), known locally as prairie gophers. Although we agree that this product is effective in controlling RGS, the environmental cost of its use exceeds its value. The high concentration and high toxicity of this product, although heavily regulated, is still subject to abuse and misuse. As you noted, scientific studies indicated poisoned RGS carcasses and baited grain often end up above ground becoming available for non-target consumption. Strychnine is non selective and even low doses are toxic to most animals including humans. Strychnine does not break down quickly in the environment nor in carcasses, lasting up to 56 days in soil and water. The expelled grain is potentially toxic to non-targeted granivores and carcasses are potentially toxic to predatory and scavenging species. Since RGS are a prairie species and in Alberta most of our endangered and threatened species are in the prairies it is incongruous to use this product under these circumstances.

Other toxicants such as first-generation anticoagulants do work if used correctly and are safer for secondary poisoning. Additionally, trapping and shooting also help reduce RGS numbers and pose less threat to endangered and other non-target species. The availability of alternate control strategies and the potential for targeted research to develop even better strategies preclude the use of such a dangerous product.



ALBERTA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

We are proponents of evidence-based decision making and believe your decision is sound and based on good science. We applaud your decision and encourage future decisions based on environmental risk rather than expediency.

Respectfully,

Alex Beatty

President, Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society

cc: Devin Dreesen, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Sonya Leverkus, President, Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society

Chris Smith, Conservation Affairs Committee, Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society