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USFWS

Threats to Black-tailed Prairie Dogs

- The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range;
- Over utilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
- Disease or predation;
- The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.



USFWS Ruling

- Habitat loss
 - rate of recent conversion from rangeland to cropland is small and most suitable cropland has already been developed
 - Given population estimates by states, urbanization cannot be considered present or future threat
 - Present or threatened habitat destruction not a threat to the species
- Texas?

Habitat Loss

- Range wide – 1982 – 1997 loss
2% of rangeland in range of BTPD
- Texas rangeland conversion
(USDA NRCS 1997)
 - High Plains 3,736,638 hectares
1.1% change (39,783 ha)
 - Rolling Plains 7,222,051
hectares 0.6% change (40,143
ha)
- Texas - 1992 to 2001 the most
notable conversion of native
rangelands and croplands was to
nonnative “improved pastures.”
- Since 1997, total rangeland acres
have stabilized



USFWS Ruling

- Scientific, education, and commercial pet trade are not threats to the species
- Interest and intensity of recreational shooting increased over past decade
 - Affects behavior, reproductive success,
 - Affects on local population – possible extirpation
 - Range wide not a threat to the species
- Texas?

Over Utilization

- Pet Trade – 1999 non-game collection/dealer permit required
 - current ban on pet trade imposed by USDA 2003; no impact
- Recreational shooting – Texas small game hunting questionnaire 2003
- Chemical Control



Commercial Collecting in Texas

Year	Number Collected	Total # Purchased	Total # Sold	Main Counties of Collection
1999-2000	5,309	-	15,324	Lubbock (3,894) Unknown(9,831)
2000-2001	11,700	1,752	12,442	Unknown (5,612) Lubbock (4,462)
2001-2002	9,254	4,256	10,423	
2002-2003	5,491	8,102	12,975	
Total	31,754		51,164	

Estimate 1.15 million prairie dogs on 115,000 acres; annually collecting between 0.5 – 1% of population

Prairie Dog Harvest

SG results			
Statistic	Estimate	U95CI	L95CI
Days per hunter	2.273	3.265	1.546
Hunters	7,021	9,146	4,896
Kill per hunter	3.764	6.861	2.008
Kill per successful hunter	5.001	8.73	2.799
Success rate	0.753	0.901	0.605
Successful hunter days	17,259	20,829	13,689
Successful hunters	5,284	7,045	3,523
Total kill	26,428	31,898	20,957

Estimate 1.15 million prairie dogs on 115,000 acres
2.3% of the population harvested

Chemical Control

- TWDMS 82 technical assistance projects:
- 1995 treated 5,051 acres
- 2000 treated 2,388 acres (2% of prairie dog acres in state)
- Rodenticides are now commercially more available
- New and “improved” control devices – Rodex
 - Not regulated by anyone
 - No estimate of control
 - Advertised at 15 cents per hole

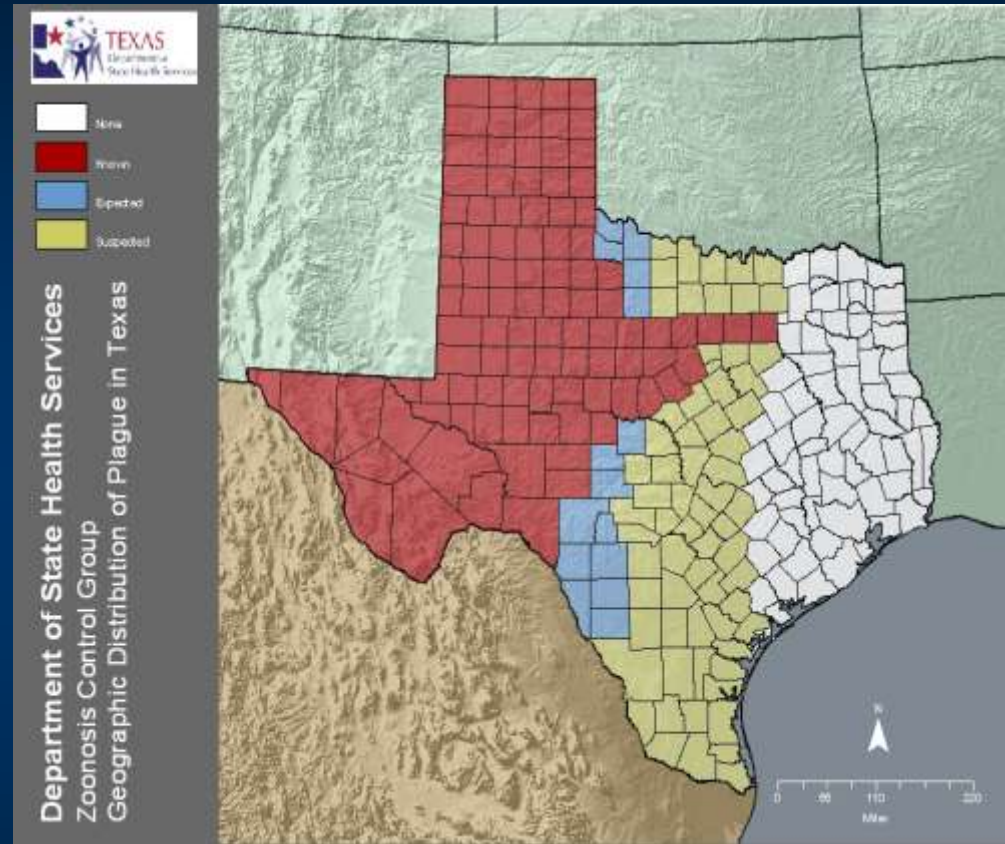


USFWS Ruling

- Populations not as vulnerable to disease as previously thought
 - Plague currently limited to 2/3 of range
 - Evidence of resistance and immunity at low level of exposure
 - Population isolation helps buffer effects
 - Population effects (reductions) dramatic but they recover
- Texas?

Plague - *Yersinia pestis*

- Statewide plague surveillance sampling since 1986
- Lake Meredith National Park plague outbreak 2001 update – colony extirpated
- 2004 TDH plague advisory to veterinarians and physicians in the West Texas, Panhandle and South Plains
- Texas BTPD Working Group establishes plague monitoring protocol



Plague - *Yersinia pestis*

- Texas Department of Health surveyed 21 locations in Dallam County for plague and 8 sites were positive.
 - Evaluated 65 prairie dog colonies in Dallam and Sherman Counties; 16 colonies became inactive in 2004 and 7 had low activity compared to what was subjectively evaluated as a healthy colony.
- Rita Blanca National Grasslands
 - loss of no less than 90% of the BTPD colonies in Texas and Oklahoma

USFWS Ruling

Inadequate Regulations

- Habitat loss – not a threat
- Over utilization (recreational shooting, scientific collection, pet trade) not a threat
- Disease – not a threat
- Chemical control – not a threat
- Above issues not identified as threats efforts to regulate are adequate

State	Designation	License Required	Limit	Season	Note
Texas	Nongame	Yes	None	Open	
Wyoming	Nongame	No	None	Open	
South Dakota	NA	Yes	None	Closed March –June 14	
North Dakota	Nongame	No	None	Open	
New Mexico	Unprotected	No	None	Open	Prohibited on State Trust Lands
Nebraska	Nongame	No	None	Open	Season proposed failed adoption by Commission
Montana	Nongame	No	None	Closed March 1 thru May 31 on public lands	Year round protection on black-footed ferret reintroduction areas
Kansas	NA	Yes	None	Open	
Colorado	Small game	Yes	NA	2001 Closed year round on public and private lands	Landowners experiencing damage or their agent may shoot
Arizona	NA	NA	NA	Closed 1999	Extirpated

Prairie Dog Management

- Address habitat loss
 - Incentives – extra points within prairie dog/lesser prairie chicken priority area in Farm Bill Program
 - Purchase development rights
 - 1996 wildlife management as a designated agricultural land use grew to 194,000 ha
 - Colorado LIP program – enroll 8,000 ha of occupied habitat – 3 years at \$600,000
- Address over utilization
 - Continue to monitor scientific collection and pet trade
 - Develop trend data regarding recreational shooting
- Address disease
 - Implement plague monitoring protocol
 - Monitor plague outbreaks
- Address inadequate regulatory mechanisms
 - Nothing

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