

Fact Sheet

Oppose House Bill 1047: Protect Prairie Dogs on Public Lands

Prairie dogs are a “keystone” species on which dozens of other animals depend for food or shelter. But in South Dakota prairie dogs can be shot at any time without limits or any license required, except on public lands where they are protected during pregnancy and pup rearing from March 1 to June 14. HB 1047 would remove this very limited protection.

This bill is extreme.

HB1047 strips authority from Game, Fish and Parks to make wildlife management decisions regarding prairie dogs. Wildlife management decisions should be made by wildlife biologists and experts.

This bill takes away the short window when wildlife watchers can enjoy prairie dogs on public lands in their natural setting free from shooting. The current 3 ½ month closure provides this opportunity for wildlife enthusiasts and tourists—both important income streams in South Dakota.

The short 3 ½ month closure provides a small but important amount of protection.

This 3 ½ month shooting closure on public lands is intended to protect prairie dogs during pregnancy and pup rearing, a common wildlife management principle and a very small amount of protection for such an important wildlife species. The eleven states in the range of the black-tailed prairie dog are engaged in ongoing collaboration to protect this species – it is critical that South Dakota maintains at least one conservation measure for this native keystone species.

The current 3 ½ month shooting closure does not regulate prairie dog shooting on private land.

Prairie dogs can be shot year-round on private land.

Prairie Dog Facts:

- Prairie dogs have an average litter size of 2.5 pups once per year.
- Prairie dogs do not carry plague. Fleas carry plague. Prairie dogs are victims of plague and 95% will die within 78 hours of infection.
- Nine species of wildlife depend on prairie dog populations. What we do to the prairie dog affects these and many other animals. These animals are the mountain plover, golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, black-footed ferret, horned lark, deer mouse, grasshopper mouse and the swift fox.
- This is about balance: prairie dog habitat on public lands has been decimated recently by plague. Associated species should not have to withstand additional prairie dog losses from unlimited shooting pressures.
- Prairie dogs are like a canary in the coal mine. If their population declines, others will soon follow. The loss of prairie dogs has implications that go beyond just prairie dogs.

For more information contact:

Lindsey Sterling Krank, Director, the Prairie Dog Coalition – Animal Care Centers
lsterlingkrank@humanesociety.org – t 720.938.0788 c 720.938.7855

Darci Adams, South Dakota State Director – The Humane Society of the United States
dadams@humanesociety.org – t 605.595.4860

