

Federal Government Bans the Use of Strychnine to Control Prairie Gophers

On March 4th, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada announced its final decision on the re-evaluation of strychnine and its associated end-use products for controlling populations of Richardson's ground squirrels.

The agency has officially banned the designated use of strychnine citing concerns with environmental risks with regards to poisoning of non-target species and potential impacts to species at risk.

People opposed to the ban have 60 days to file a scientifically-based objection to Ottawa's decision.

The phase out of cancelled products will take place over three years:

- Registrants of products containing strychnine (such as Maxim Chemical International Ltd.) may sell the product for one year from the date of the Health Canada decision;
- Retailers may sell the product for one year from the last date of a registrant's sale;
- Users are permitted to use and apply the product for one year from the last date of sale by a retailer.

AWA has long opposed the use of strychnine to control Richardson's ground squirrel populations. This poison poses significant threats to species at risk such as burrowing owls, ferruginous hawks, and swift foxes. All of these prairie-dependent species rely on ground squirrels as a critical food source. AWA has also cited human health concerns, with strychnine baits potentially contaminating water and/or soil.

While AWA is pleased with this re-evaluation decision, concerns still remain with regards to the humaneness of using this substance, and its application to larger mammal species such as wolves or coyotes.

- Nissa Petterson