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## ***How Prairie Dog Relocation Works***

Poisoning or simply bulldozing prairie dogs alive in their burrows has been the common approach to dealing with unwanted colonies. Properly conducted prairie dog relocation is humane and restores the ecosystem at the release site. There are only two humane methods of capture: **Properly conducted flushing with soapy water or continuously monitored live traps.**

### **Prairie Dog Relocation Process**

#### **Soapy Water:**

- A mild dishwashing liquid is mixed into a water tank and hosed into prairie dog burrows.
- The soap bubbles fill the burrow making the prairie dogs want to exit the burrow.
- A second person uses their bare hands to catch the dogs as they exit the burrow. The prairie dog is then dried with a towel.
- Saline eye drops are applied to the eyes to clear away the soap and any dirt.
- The prairie dogs are placed into pet carriers filled with grass hay and flea dusted.

#### **Live Trapping:**

- Live cage traps are placed at each active burrow, baited, and continuously monitored. When captured, prairie dogs will be immediately flea dusted. They are removed from exposure to the elements and placed into pet carriers filled with grass hay.
- A separate carrier is used for each coterie so families are kept together and released together.
- Three to four people are needed to do this work for most sites; volunteers are needed.
- The crew uses food coloring on the fur to identify family groups and to make sure prairie dogs that emerge together are released together.

#### **Land Preparation & Release:**

- The release site is prepared by trenching for artificial burrows. Artificial burrows are underground nesting boxes with tubing attached to the ground's surface, which serves as a rudimentary burrow system.
- The prairie dogs are flea dusted and placed by hand into artificial burrows. Each burrow contains a family group.
- After each group is placed into their artificial burrow, an above ground cage cap is attached to the tubing to contain the animals. Plenty of favorite foods are placed into the cage.
- The prairie dogs remain in these structures for up to one week. Daily feeding is conducted. When the time is appropriate, the cages are removed from the artificial burrows. A minimal two days of intensive monitoring is required to insure the prairie dogs commit to digging home burrows within the accepted release area.
- Predator monitoring and non-lethal discouragement may be conducted, such as installing fencing around the release area.
- Regular monitoring and daily feeding are conducted at the onset.
- Maintenance efforts may include regular flea dusting around burrows, and supplemental feeding during drought conditions.