

PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT PLAN POLICY STATEMENT

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Foothills Board of Directors adopts a prairie dog management plan to ensure existing prairie dog habitats are protected while allowing for community use of parks and open lands.

Migration of prairie dogs onto golf courses or irrigated turf (active and passive recreation areas) raises several safety and health related issues. Prairie dogs cause considerable turf and tree root damage at our golf courses and parks sites, the burrow holes interfere with play on golf courses, athletic fields and open play areas, and severe health questions arise due to disease carrying flea's that may jump to domestic animals passing through prairie dog colony boundaries.

The District finds that a comprehensive prairie dog management plan will preserve the critical balance between wildlife habitat and activities within parks and open lands. The purpose and intent of this policy is to protect the public health, safety and general welfare of all Foothills District residents and properties.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA AND CONTROL

There are three types of prairie dogs in the State of Colorado, but the black-tailed prairie dog is the only species that occupies lands within Foothills District. Prairie dogs are burrowing animals that form colonies of between 8 to 35 dogs per acre. Prairie dog colonies do not thrive in tall grasses as the dogs tend to congregate in areas where grazing animals keep the grasses less than 12 inches tall, or where mowing practices provide open views of potential predators.

Prairie dog habitats exist primarily within native grass areas in the District. It is the intent of this management plan to protect those habitats and minimize conflict caused by public use of those areas.

For those instances where prairie dog control is required, there are several generally accepted methods of prairie dog control in Colorado; barriers, trapping or vacuuming and relocation, shooting, poison grain bait, and fumigation. Barriers (either manmade or natural) are the preferred and most effective method of colony control within our native and non-irrigated areas. However, for those areas where prairie dogs have spread into active and/or irrigated areas of our parks, fumigation is the preferred method. Trapping or vacuuming and relocation are costly and there are few, if any relocation sites available within Colorado. Shooting is not an acceptable practice within suburban areas. Poison Grain bait is not acceptable due to the risk of spreading poison to humans, wildlife, or domestic animals.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

The prairie dog management plan for Foothills District shall include the following guidelines. Each management situation shall be treated individually and one or more of these guidelines may apply in each case.

- **Prairie dog colonies that remain within the boundaries of native grass or non-irrigated passive park areas shall be protected.**
- **If the prairie dogs or colony boundaries migrate onto irrigated turf or play areas, Foothills shall use a combination of native grasses, dense planting of vegetation, sand trenches, and fencing to restrict the migration of colonies. Native grasses will remain unmown throughout the growing season, which results in a potential grass height of 12 to 30 inches. Dense planting of vegetation or underground sand trenches and fencing will be used where growth of native grasses is not practical or where suburban development patterns prohibit the growth of native grasses.**
- **The preferred method of restricting colony migration shall be natural or manmade barriers.**
- **Fumigation shall be used in those instances where barriers are not keeping prairie dogs out of irrigated turf or play areas. Fumigation shall be conducted in limited areas and in emergency cases only, specifically where the public health, safety, and general welfare is concerned. Fumigation treatments shall be applied by a licensed chemical applicator and may be used more than once to achieve desired results.**
- **Appropriate control methods shall be implemented in cases where prairie dogs are migrating from Foothills District property onto residential or commercial properties. Foothills generally will not implement control measures based upon any single property owner or single business complaint. Instead, the local HOA or commercial management group must provide a written statement granting Foothills the authority to implement control measures.**

MAINTNENACE PRACTICES

It is the intent of this management program to protect and preserve prairie dog habitat within native grass areas of the District. Foothills staff shall use all appropriate wildlife management practices to ensure our goals are met.

The Foothills Parks Maintenance and Golf Course Maintenance staff shall be responsible for implementation and ongoing maintenance practices outlined within this policy. Application of such practices shall be completed following consultation and in cooperation with local government agencies, the Colorado Department of Wildlife Management, and if warranted due to concerns about disease, the Colorado Department of Health.