

Using fumigants

Fumigation is another option to control ground squirrels but it is less selective than poisons. Fumigants are only effective when the ground squirrel is in their burrows - early in the morning, late at night or during cool or rainy weather.

As with Rozol, fumigation is most effective immediately after the ground squirrels emerge from hibernation. Gas cartridges, phostoxin and "RoCon" foam are all fumigation options.

Using traps

Trapping can be effective, but labour-intensive. Trapping is best conducted soon after ground squirrels emerge from hibernation. Humane or cage traps can be used to capture ground squirrels unharmed for relocation. Most traps do not require a food lure, but it may help.

Shooting ground squirrels

Shooting is another effective option, but a time consuming and costly method. It is most effective in areas where ground squirrel numbers are low. However, ground squirrels will quickly become wary once shots are fired. Shooting is only permitted outside the Special Control Area, Urban Service Area and Hamlet Policy Areas. Please refer to the Firearm Control Bylaw 3-2014.

Further Information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/pests

Office hours:
Monday to Friday
8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Closed from 12 noon to 1 pm
and on statutory holidays



Richardson's Ground Squirrels

Living with wildlife
in Strathcona County





Behaviour

Richardson's Ground Squirrels (commonly known as 'gophers') are found in many areas throughout Alberta. They are the most common form of ground squirrel in the province.

Ground squirrels are an important food source for a number of species: long tailed weasels, badgers, coyotes and foxes. Notably, badgers are the only predator with the ability to hunt ground squirrels year round.

High populations of ground squirrels can create serious problems in rural areas because they:

- compete with livestock for forage.
- destroy food crops.
- damage golf courses and lawns.
- weaken ditch banks (making them unsafe for farm machinery).
- injure livestock (if they fall into the holes).
- mound soil from their burrows on vegetation.
- can damage haying machinery.
- prey on the eggs and young of ground-nesting birds.

Although some of the ground squirrel population is naturally taken care of by predators, sometimes lethal control is necessary.

Management

Rozol bait is a registered anti-coagulant poison. After ingestion, it prevents blood from clotting resulting in a reasonably painless death several days later. Anti-coagulants are available in several grain bait forms, as well as a liquid concentrate that can be mixed with grain. Anti-coagulants do not pose a significant risk to non-target animals.

When to use

The most effective time to use Rozol is in late March, after the female ground squirrels have come out of hibernation. They usually emerge two weeks after the males. Ground squirrel numbers are lower at this time of year.

Baiting holes

One tablespoon of bait should be placed in every ground squirrel hole. Make sure the bait goes down the hole in a pile on the side of the tunnel and that it is deep enough to prevent birds and other animals from eating it. After the initial treatment, the bait should be refreshed in each hole where the bait is being eaten. Do this every four days.

Does it work?

Ground squirrels do not show any signs of adverse effects from Rozol until a day or two after the placement of bait. In fact, they will appear quite healthy until they die.

A day or two after placing Rozol bait, you should conduct a thorough search for dead ground squirrels. Any carcasses found should be handled with gloves and disposed of properly.

When using any rodenticides, make sure to read and follow the instructions on the label closely.

Bait stations

An alternative to spot-baiting is to use bait stations, which are available at most farm retailers. Stations can also be easily made from PVC piping (see diagram below). Bait stations provide a safe location to keep poison away from non-targeted animals. Each station should contain approximately 500 grams of bait. Stations should be checked regularly to maintain a constant supply.

