SUMMARY

Issue

Health Canada recently authorized the emergency use of strychnine in Alberta and Saskatchewan until fall 2027, in a dramatic reversal of their science-based ban of strychnine in March 2024, and their rejection for emergency use in February 2026, citing unacceptable environmental risks. Public opposition to this reversal has been swift and substantial.

Resolutions Sought

i. For Health Canada to cancel the emergency use authorization of strychnine poison and deregister it permanently in Canada.
ii. For the Governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan to advance sustainable, non-poison alternative solutions (see attached), to limit Richardson's ground squirrel populations, including ceasing bounties on their natural predators.
iii. For the 3 governments to re-invest in agri-environmental policies and programs which support regenerative and sustainable land practices on the Prairies, adapted to drought, to improve production and resilience long-term, and complement prairie biodiversity.

Key Facts

Strychnine has been deregistered multiple times in Canada, and is banned or highly restricted internationally. Health Canada denied emergency use (Feb 6, 2026) due to environmental risks; then approved it (Mar 30, 2026) with questionable mitigation, later weakened by geographic expansion. The approved use area (~450,000 km^2) overlaps critical habitat for species at risk and protected areas. Ground squirrels are the staple food in grassland kitchens, a keystone species. Their numbers increase during droughts. Alternative measures exist to reduce their populations. Strychnine is highly toxic, non-selective, and has no antidote. Death-by-strychnine is painful. Non-target and secondary poisoning cannot be reliably prevented. Field evidence confirms exposure of non-target wildlife, including species at risk and migratory birds, pets, and livestock to strychnine. Public opposition is significant and growing.

Risks If Unresolved

- Loss of public and consumer support. The public has repeatedly voiced its concerns in regulatory consultations, media, letters, and now petitions to Health Canada (4,465 signatures, May 2026). Erosion of public trust in regulatory processes, market confidence, and Canada's environmental credibility, while placing producers under public scrutiny.
- May further endanger prairie ecosystems and species at risk; require emergency measures.
- Specified use is difficult to achieve under real-world conditions; past use shows non-compliance and under-reporting; costs to enforce; potential fines and damages.
- Potential loss of charitable funding for grassland ecosystems if governments appear uncommitted to conservation.
- Veers away from environmentally-supportive food production, a growing industry.
- Strychnine use does not address the root causes faced by producers. Support needs to shift immediately to alternative solutions and resilience planning.

To the Prime Minister and Federal/Provincial Ministers Responsible for Introducing an Emergency Use of Strychnine in Alberta and Saskatchewan until 2027

PURPOSE

Request the Government of Canada cancel its authorization for the emergency use of strychnine in Alberta and Saskatchewan until November 2027.

Request the Government of Canada permanently deregister (ban) strychnine poison and not permit any emergency use of it in Canada.

Request the Governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan advance sustainable, non-poison alternative solutions (see "Rationale"), to limit Richardson's ground squirrel populations, including ceasing bounties on their natural predators.

Request the 3 governments re-invest in agri-environmental policies and programs which support regenerative and sustainable land practices on the Prairies, adapted to drought, to improve production and resilience long-term, and complement prairie biodiversity.

To circulate this letter, with periodic updates, to citizens, communities, and organizations in Canada, for their *endorsement in principle and signature*, until strychnine poison is no longer allowed for any use in Canada.

WHY

Health Canada has deregistered strychnine use 4 times since 1992 after considering field studies, veterinary reports, scientific publications, and public consultation. On the 6 February 2026, Health Canada denied the emergency use request, based on scientific information, and cited again environmental risks. How much more science is needed to firmly close the book on this chapter.

The strychnine zone is large, about the size of Sweden. It encompasses critical habitats for numerous species at risk, important migratory bird and protected areas, and covers an endangered grassland ecosystem, of which Richardson's ground squirrel is a key component. The likely impacts of non-target and secondary poisoning to wildlife, including species at risk and migratory birds protected by federal legislation, is significant. This decision counters the Government of Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature and is misaligned with sustainable development goals to halt biodiversity loss.

There is little public support. People are concerned about the way animals die from strychnine; non-targeted poisoning of domestic animals and wildlife, especially aerial and ground predators; species at risk; ecosystem health; human health, and argue that better alternatives exist. Concerns on social media are substantial (see "Public Comments"), including from some

farmers and ranchers. Petitions to Health Canada have thousands of signatures. Individuals and organizations have given media interviews and statements opposing the decision.

The approval may jeopardize the public trust and consumers confidence in agriculture in Canada, as strychnine use has been denounced world-wide. The approval seems to focus on short-term economic and political goals. It does not contribute to a viable long-term solution for farms and ranches faced with serious drought conditions predicted to continue.

A decision like this, considering its history and environmental risks, warrants consultation with the federal minister responsible for species at risk and migratory birds.

To proceed, regulatory oversight and enforcement, which comes with costs, would be necessary, given past mitigation measures have been ineffective (non-targeted animals died) and past non-compliances.

Emergency use of an unregistered pesticide requires: i) no effective product or application method is registered in Canada for the control of the pest; and ii) no effective, alternative control methods are available (Health Canada 2026). Alternative control methods have been available for some time (see "Rationale").

Please find attached a detailed explanation with recommended solutions going forward.

REGULATORY TIMELINE AND SCOPE

Pesticide use in Canada is regulated federally under Health Canada. Strychnine use for ground squirrels was cancelled in 1992, 2003, and 2020, mainly due to risks of poisoning non-targeted animals. In 2024, Health Canada cancelled all uses of strychnine in Canada because it did not meet the requirements for protecting the environment. It remains banned or highly restricted in most other countries. The European Union banned strychnine in 2006.

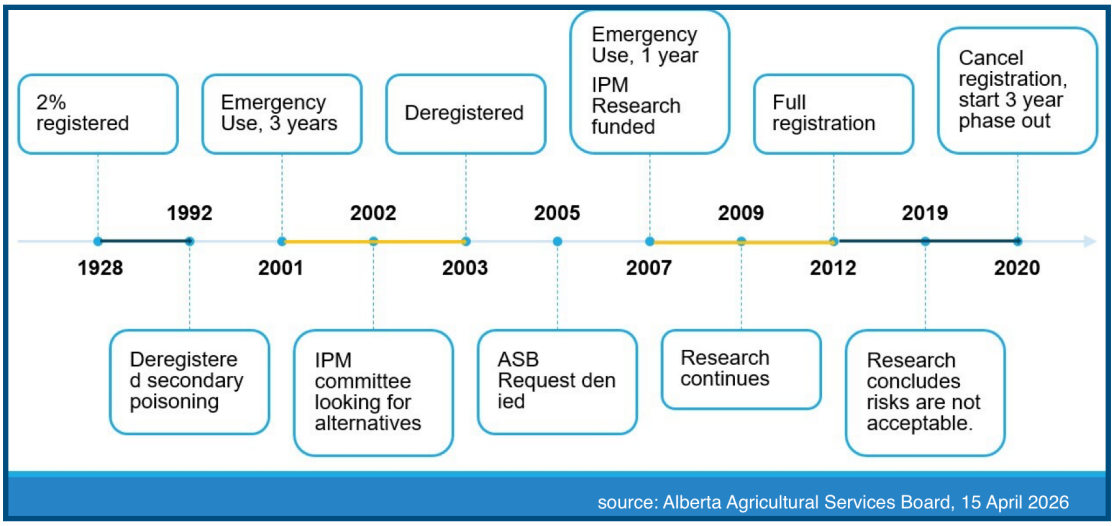
Recently, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation requested approval for the emergency use of strychnine on Richardson's ground squirrels (gophers; RGS) until 2027, and allegedly, based on media sources, may pursue a request to permanently register strychnine use.

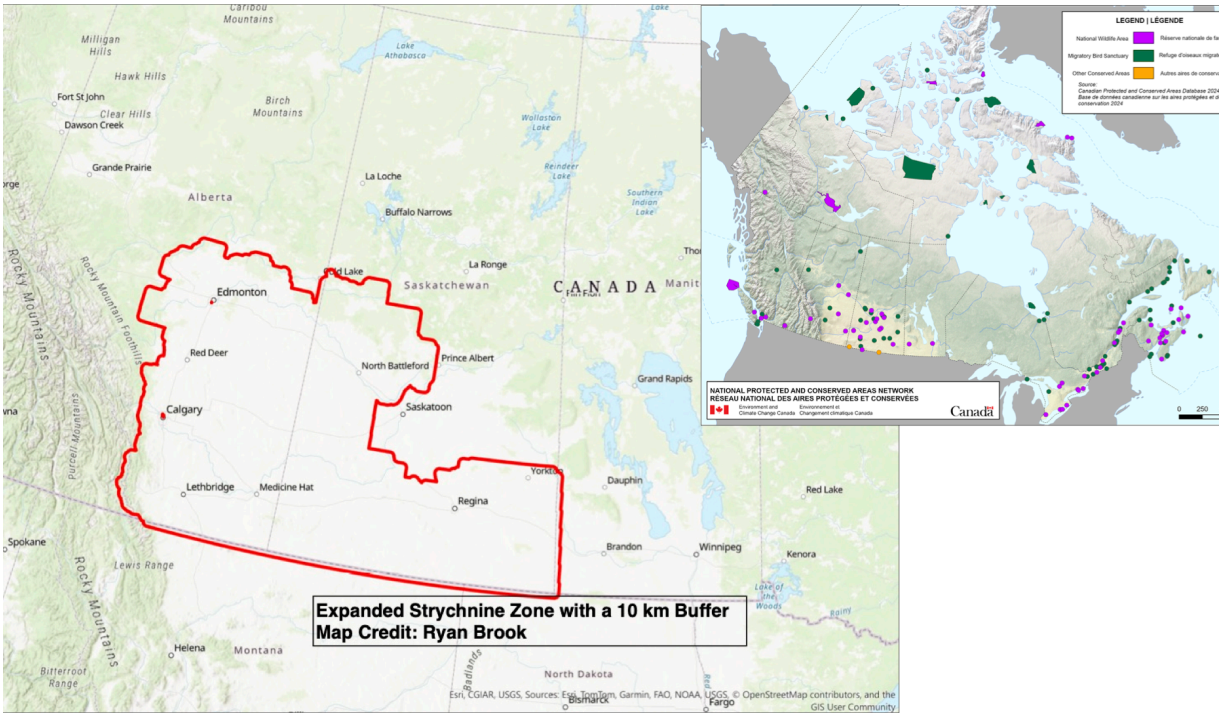
Health Canada denied the request on the 6 February 2026 citing environmental risks: "Following a review of the available scientific information, risks associated with the use of strychnine to control RGS were not shown to be acceptable when used according to the proposed label directions and required mitigation measures."

Health Canada reversed its decision on the 30 March 2026, and with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, issued a statement: "Our governments worked closely leading up to this submission which contains additional restrictions and mitigation measures to lower the environmental risk to an acceptable level. These measures, amongst others, include *a reduced*

geographical scope and revised product stewardship program. The additional risk mitigation measures are significant and are expected to reduce environmental risks and support prairie farmers for the upcoming growing season."

In March 2026, the Prime Minister of Canada and Saskatchewan's Premier travelled to India for trade negotiations. According to media sources, a tentative agreement was reached for enhanced trade in pulse crops and a new bi-national pulse research centre in India.





Strychnine Zone with a 10-km Buffer (Ryan Brook 2026) and National Protected and Conserved Areas (Environment and Climate Change Canada 2024)

Health Canada expanded the geographic scope of strychnine use in Saskatchewan about the 9 April 2026, apparently at the request of the Government of Saskatchewan, negating one of the primary mitigation measures justifying the 30 March 2026 decision.

The expanded strychnine zone includes Grasslands and Elk Island National Parks (and borders Waterton and Prince Albert National Parks), >20 federally-protected national wildlife areas and bird sanctuaries, provincial parks, and large areas of conservation lands and grazing co-operatives who safeguard healthy grassland ecosystems. The strychnine zone covers the entire range and critical habitat of the endangered greater-sage grouse and threatened ferruginous hawk and swift fox in Canada.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

The federal government's abrupt regulatory reversal on the 30 March 2026 has not gone unnoticed. The public is responding en masse on social media with concerns about secondary poisoning to wildlife, species at risk, and domestic animals. There are thousands of comments (please see attached sample). Many express anger and disappointment.

Petitions to ban strychnine permanently in Canada (change.org) are circulating with >3500 signatures (as of April 21). Statements by several organizations opposing the decision and/or expressing concern have been released and likely will continue. Academics that were interviewed agreed there are serious risks to wildlife and domestic animals that cannot be mitigated.

This decision by the federal government puts prairie farmers and ranchers in the cross hairs of public opinion, even though many do not support or recommend using poison as a solution.

RATIONALE

Evapotranspiration is the pest, not Richardson's ground squirrels (gophers)

Warmer temperatures and higher evapotranspiration rates are predicted to continue and increase in the southern Prairies.

The federal government justified their decision on the 30 March 2026 saying "The prairies have been experiencing *abnormally* dry conditions, which affects the sustainability and quality of *farmlands* and allowed the population of these gophers to increase significantly."

It is true, Richardson's ground squirrels, endemic only to the northern plains, like dry soils. Their populations tend to increase during arid conditions. And yes, some farmlands are located in areas with extreme moisture deficits. Some would say those lands should never have been tilled and remained as grassland. The federal ministers responsible also attest current conditions are "abnormal". This statement is not valid. Droughts are the new normal. Much of the Prairies have been in drought to varying degrees for the past 7-9 years.

Canada's climate assessments show that warming is increasing evaporation and transpiration and contributing to more frequent, more intense drought and soil-moisture deficits across the Prairies (Bush & Lemmen 2019; Sauchyn et al. 2021; Climate West 2022).

Richardson's ground squirrels create burrow systems known to retain soil moisture. Research on the benefits of soil biopertebators, ecosystem engineers, such as burrowing mammals, in arid areas of Australia, Asia, and the US, is extensive. Eliminating burrowing mammals during extreme drought conditions is contrary to building resilience in a fragile system.

Do the governments of Canada, Alberta, and Saskatchewan intend to release strychnine into the environment in perpetuity? What is their long-term plan given the climate-projections?

Strychnine is extremely and acutely toxic with no antidote

There is very little room for error with strychnine.

Safety data sheets for strychnine, available online by the manufacturers, classify the hazard level as extreme and acute. Strychnine has no antidote. It can be absorbed through eyes and skin; inhaled; and consumed accidentally. It is highly toxic in water. It should not be deposited in drains, or near ground or surface water. Most safety data sheets state "no data available" regarding its persistence in air, soil, and water, and bioaccumulation effects.

Strychnine causes severe muscle spasms, seizures, and respiratory failure within minutes to a couple of hours. Animal-welfare concern is one reason why strychnine has drawn much global criticism over the years. Human exposure, although rare, has happened.

Strychnine is not approved for use in other countries

The European Union has banned strychnine since 2006. Strychnine is not approved for use in most other countries, including the United States and Australia except under strict and narrow circumstances (Health Canada 2026). Aligning more with markets that avoid certain pesticides, such as the European Union, could increase and diversify trade.

Does Alberta and Saskatchewan want to be viewed globally as using strychnine on cropland and rangeland? It places Canada outside prevailing best practices and international standards.

Poisoned gophers, and bait, do not remain below ground

Richardson's ground squirrels die on the surface of treated sites even when the manufacturer's instructions are followed (Health Canada 2005; 2018). A study by Saskatchewan Agriculture in 2019 found 1 gopher carcass on the surface per 15 baited burrows, even though the strychnine was administered up to 1 m below ground, or 30 cm below ground in burrows covered by soil.

The same study reported 8-15% of treated burrows had bait ejected from them, exposing non-targeted organisms to strychnine (Health Canada 2020). Once a day monitoring for a week, post application, to retrieve ejected bait and/or above-ground carcasses, and burying carcasses, are not adequate mitigation measures to avoid non-target and secondary poisoning.

Evidence of non-compliance in past applications of strychnine

Poisoning events from strychnine were documented after the 2023 ban (Cowan 2025). In its 2024 assessment, Health Canada found "that there was more strychnine used than the number of poisoned carcasses retrieved. This means that there were strychnine-poisoned carcasses available in the environment for other animals to feed on which increases the risk of secondary poisoning." Health Canada concluded: "Since practical risk-reduction measures to protect non-target animals cannot be identified and to minimize the impact on biodiversity, Health Canada is cancelling all uses of strychnine with a six-month phase-out period."

Without regulatory enforcement with monitoring, which has costs, and given known non-compliance and under reporting, how do the governments ensure no effects to non-target animals? Will penalties be enforced for non-compliance? What regulatory labelling on pesticides does Health Canada require for species-at-risk considerations?

Pets and non-targeted wildlife die from strychnine poison

If someone is wearing full-protective gear, using appropriate storage equipment, and can monitor ground-squirrel burrows from dawn-to dusk, the risks to humans, domestic animals, and wildlife would be minimal. But, in reality, this is not how it works. Real-world farm conditions make adherence unlikely and impractical especially for broad-scale applications.

Data on non-targeted and secondary poisoning from strychnine is clear. Farm animals, pets, at-risk wildlife, and even migratory birds, ingest it directly. Predators and scavengers die from eating poisoned Richardson's ground squirrels. "Prairie Diagnostic Services confirmed 51 cases of strychnine poisoning in western Canada from 2014 to 2023…dogs (n = 38), horses (n = 5), and wildlife (n = 8). Most poisonings occurred in Alberta (n = 23) and Saskatchewan (n = 25) (Cowan 2023). Reported and confirmed incidents represent only a fraction of actual deaths.

Dr. Barry Blakley, a veterinarian toxicologist at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon, said in 2018, they saw 6-7 dogs poisoned yearly by strychnine.

"The risks to non-target wildlife from primary and secondary poisoning are particularly high with strychnine, and the proposed field monitoring mitigation measures have proved ineffective in the past when strychnine was registered for this use. When strychnine was previously registered, many incidents were reported to the PMRA related to this use in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Incidents were likely underestimated as scavengers are very efficient at

finding and consuming or removing poisoned carcasses from the field surface" (Health Canada 2026).

Field evidence of poisoning by strychnine and chlorophacinone, an anticoagulant, used to reduce Richardson's ground squirrel populations in southwest Saskatchewan, showed ground squirrels, songbirds, small mammals, raptors, badgers, and weasels, were killed (Proulx 2011). Snakes are exposed to pesticides via food, inhalation, and skin (Weir et al. 2014) and population decline is possible (Bishop et al. 2016).

British Columbia permanently banned the sale and widespread use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in 2023 to protect wildlife from secondary poisoning.

Protected species at risk are vulnerable to incidental strychnine poisoning

At-risk burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, grizzly bear, and swift fox, protected by legislation, are present within the strychnine zone. All consume Richardson's ground squirrels as a regular dietary item. A pair of ferruginous hawks, rearing young, will consume about 500 Richardson's ground squirrels during the nesting season (Ng 2020). A grizzly bear, a species at risk provincially, and now federally, died from strychnine poison in Alberta in 2014 (Cowan 2025). Grazers can consume poisoned bait if it is available above ground (Colvin et al. 1988; Cowan 2025). The few endangered greater-sage grouse remaining in Canada are in the strychnine zone.

Canada's Species at Risk Act and provincial wildlife acts have legal prohibitions to protect at-risk species, their residences and habitats. It is worth noting, US EPA labels for poisoned baits include text about "endangered species considerations". For example, a label for zinc phosphide rodent bait states it "cannot be used 30 days prior to arrival and 30 days after whooping cranes leave known crane habitat."

Snowy Owl was assessed as threatened in Canada in 2025. The same year, it was listed as extinct in Sweden. In Canada, rodenticides directly kill Snowy Owls or weaken them making them vulnerable to further injury (COSEWIC 2025). The re-introduction of strychnine use in Alberta and Saskatchewan may generate the need for an emergency order by the federal government to protect Snowy Owls on the Prairies.

Cumulative effects to wildlife populations

Wildlife, like air and water, benefit the public, many millions of people, and do not adhere to boundaries.

Wildlife face numerous threats and challenges: habitat loss, climate change, extreme weather, fires, vehicle collisions, competition for limited resources, human-caused mortality, pesticides,

and disease, such as the avian flu. Adding an acute and extreme toxin to the mix, like strychnine, one known to cause unintended consequences, is not acceptable.

Further Comments

- Only humane methods should be used to kill Richardson's ground squirrels.
- No poison should be used for broad-scale applications.
- Second-generation anticoagulants should be de-registered.
- The 2022-23 strychnine alternatives trial by Saskatchewan Agriculture shows that zinc phosphide is as effective and less costly than strychnine.
- Canada does not rank well in environmental performance. The decision to approve strychnine use will not improve Canada's global ranking. **https://epi.yale.edu/**

SOLUTIONS (NON-POISON)

The following solutions are based on public and private comments and input from citizens; farmers and ranchers; biologists and researchers; wildlife conservation and rehabilitation organizations in Canada, primarily from Alberta and Saskatchewan.

SOLUTIONS

- More permanent cover, with drought-tolerant grasses, to reduce evapotranspiration, dry soil, short vegetation, and Richardson's ground squirrels (RGS).
- Removing the current bounties on coyotes who kill RGS as a key food source.
- Using working dogs to kill and deter problem RGS.
- Using a 22 (with non-lead bullets), in February-March, to kill problem RGS, along with dogs, is recommended by farmers and ranchers on social media.
- Badgers and coyotes specialize on killing RGS, yet are targeted by many people. Co-existence practices are needed to support the ecological services provided by natural predators who can reduce RGS populations up to 50%.
- Tall platforms and nest boxes installed in croplands (not near greater sage-grouse) to attract raptors, efficient predators of RGS.
- Shrubs and trees along field perimeters, roadsides, and wetlands, provide cover, perches, and corridors to increase kill rates of RGS by natural predators.
- Tall dense grass/forage along the perimeter of crop fields deter RGS.
- For small-scale applications, box traps and odour deterrents are an option.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMEND THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTS PROMOTE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES FOR THE SOUTHERN PRAIRIES:

Establish policies, programs, and regulations that support allowing natural predators to regulate small mammal populations as a long-term management tool. Invest in co-existence outreach and engagement; infrastructure (e.g., raptor platforms); and habitats.

Support, promote, and implement non-poison solutions. Support non-poison integrated pest management approaches; establish prairie working groups.

Restrict poison alternatives (e.g., chlorophacinone; zinc phosphide) to only narrow applications, where strong evidence of extensive damage exists, non-poison solutions are not feasible, and no at-risk species are present. Better monitor and regulate the applications.

Employ long-term drought-adapted land management strategies that favour resilient land-use practices, restoring marginal cropland to native grassland, regenerative approaches, and nature-based solutions.

Reinvest in collaborative programs (e.g., AAFC Living Laboratories Initiative) to co-develop and test innovative practices and technologies to address agri-environmental issues.

Consider the effects of large-scale private owners (>10,000 acres each), which increased by 140% from 2018-23 in Saskatchewan (Magnan et al. 2026), on crop damage claims, and land stewardship and policies.

Support and promote community-based land and water stewardship.

Support and market premium family-farm and ranch operations in Canada, with high environmental and health standards and best practices, to increase their profile and revenues. Consider ways to align and promote this sector with the *Green Deal* and *Farm to Fork Strategy* to enhance trade with the European Union.

Consider establishing a learning centre in southwest Saskatchewan that addresses biodiversity, cropland and rangeland challenges in drought conditions, through field research, consultation, and engagement. Similar to the Northern Studies Centre in Churchill, Manitoba, the facility could be partially funded by public experiential vacations.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ecologically, it's like poisoning the staple food in your grassland kitchen. - Nikki, Canmore, AB

I have decades worth of research and reports on IPMs [Integrated Pest Management] and lethal control of ground squirrels and pocket gophers and they all point to the same thing - there are more effective and safer ways of dealing with them than poison. - Melanie, Winnipeg, MB

I came off a farm. We got rid of our gophers by shooting them. We didn't allow poison on our land. We used 22s to get rid of our gothers. Good food for the owls, hawks and other wild life. - Don, Yorkton, SK

Those that forget the sins of the past are doomed to repeat them. Yes some people will put the poison down the holes but most will do the easy way. You have to be diligent and pickup and burn or bury the carcasses. Again people get lazy. Those that claim this won't kill off the predators are just lying to themselves. - William, SK

As a kid growing up in Saskatchewan we didn't need poison. We all had .22s with iron sights. - Greg, Arizona

There are reasons it was banned in the first place! You're literally poisoning the fields where food grows.

A cheaper (a.k.a. FREE) tool would be Owls…Hawks...etc. - Rebecca, AB

I have lived on the praries most of my life. I emailed my mla about the Strychnine approval in the Canadian praries. I outlined the extreme negative impact to predator species including but not limited to coyotes, wolves, weasels, fishers, mink, lynx, bobcat, eagles, hawks, owls, corvids. The prolific breeding of gophers will replenish the population in short time however the population of these predators will lag severely behind creating a gap for the gophers to possibly populate further. The use of Strychnine will resonate through the entire ecosystem for years to come. My suggestion is to create a reasonable bounty where both farmers and hunters alike will benefit from in hopes to further reduce the population rather than decimate the predators who are helping thus far. - Karlin, Pierceland, SK

Way better to encourage hunters to come in and control the population and only one species is controlled - Gary, Wainwright, AB

Very bad idea. This will poison more than just the gophers. Maybe if a few more predators were allowed to live and do their thing, this wouldn't be a problem. - Estelle, Wainwright, AB

We just purged my gopher population with 3 days of shooting them!
No poison , no toxic waste left for other predators. Done - Jana, Wainwright, AB

I have questions and concerns, as my family raise Malamutes. Malamutes that are avid hunters. Gophers, birds, and mice are the top three things they frequently catch. Today, my stomach absolutely dropped when I noticed one of our dogs had a dead gopher hanging from her mouth. This is not the first this year (already), and will not be the last. How do I ensure the safety of our pets? Where do we get more information on where its being used? Etc.
I wish more thought was put into this foolish idea before it was implemented. My heart breaks for all of the poor animals that will die a horrific death because of this decision. It will not be just gophers. - Brandi, Wainwright, AB

That's not a bad-ger. He's a good-ger. We lived on an acreage some years ago and we had a huge ground squirrel problem, with nests, holes and mounds all over the place and getting worse, exponentially, every year. Then one spring a badger moved in. Inside one summer season our ground squirrel problem ceased to exist, and we quit talking about badgers and started talking about "goodgers". He stayed and became a permanent resident, and cleverly managed the ground squirrel population so he would always have food but never so many that they were any kind of problem. He never bothered the dogs or cats or children and never became any kind of problem himself. He was a perfect neighbour. Every rural dwelling should have a resident goodger. - Jim, Lethbridge, AB

The better long game - No one is denying that Richardson's ground squirrels can pose real problems for producers, or that boom years demand a response. The question is not simply how fast numbers can be knocked back; it is what kind of prairie is left afterward. The prairie is already under strain from drought, heat, habitat loss, and fragmentation. In a system carrying that much pressure, the way we choose to manage one species matters. Predator-friendly habitat, taller vegetation where possible, raptor platforms, nest boxes, and other integrated pest-management approaches may take more patience than pouring poison into burrows, but they offer something poison cannot: control that does not come at the expense of the prairie food web. Rather than contaminating the prey base and putting hawks, owls, coyotes, foxes, and badgers at risk, these approaches support the very animals that help keep ground squirrel numbers in check. - Leeanne, Calgary, AB

I understand the need, but I can not support this at all. There was and will be again, far to many secondary poisoning to it. I do not agree with the comment that this is absolutely necessary. There are other options. - Darell, Prince Albert, SK

Thanks to you [on Scott Moe's FB page], one of our resident owls is dead. The original gopher control, poisoned by you. Look, I live on a farm. Surrounded by farms. But farmers poison and then pull out tree rows- there's nowhere for hawks/owls to perch to scan the ground for gophers. - Liezel, southwest SK

I'm not a farmer and can't speak to the struggles they are having. But it disturbs me greatly to see that Grasslands National Park falls within the strychnine approved zone.

Slow the coyote culls and the rodent population will shrink. Use this toxic poison and the population of many prairie animals will shrink! This is a horrible idea. - Marsha, Unity, SK

I wouldn't call myself a tree hugger but let's be honest here.. We've ripped out most of the shelter belts in this province that provided perching and nesting for the hawks, falcons, and owls that each consume around 3 ground squirrels/day and up to 10/day when feeding hatchlings. Now how many are going to die by secondary poisoning? This is how the Swift Fox became extirpated. - Jerrod, SK

the problem is not that wide spread not even close a very bad idea - Don, SK

No way should strychnine be used, especially when there are coyote and wolf killing contests that are held in this hellhole of a province. - Tanya, AB

I lived for 22 years on native prairie grasslands, never poisoned or shot the ground squirrels (95% of juveniles are dead by their first birthday, btw) and I had hawks, falcons, eagles, skunks, badgers, weasels - every predator in existence used to drop in, just the most unique balance. Ground squirrels, from when I lived a bit westwards a valley or two nearer the Eastern Slopes, were then so numerous one August day that driving down Grand Valley Road doing 20 kph all I could hear/feel was the 'squish' of 'why did the ground squirrel cross the road' - In more recent years - numbers dropped and dropped and dropped steadily, and the evidence of predators - they all moved somewhere else, went hungry - the skies were empty, so noticeable. One hay farmer taught me how to control populations, too, by planting certain crops certain ways - and for acreages with those damned stupid huge green grass 'empty ballrooms', well, there's an easy way, too, to control populations that Humans are encouraging. No drugs, no horrendous strychnine spasms, no poisons.....so wish people would get way more creative. - Pam, Cochrane, AB

We are on a farm....we do not poison any animals....it is wrong....whatever eats those animals ALSO GETS POISONED.....it is wrong…. - Denis, AB

This is not going to end well. - Lee, AB

Quit killing their predators. Ray, Calgary, AB
In the old days when my mom was a girl growing up on a farm growing grain near Edmonton, the kids were shown how to use a 22 and sent out to shoot them. My mom became a crack shot. Now they want it done without work, no fuss, no muss, and who cares about the other creatures that die? - Haley, AB

Didn't we learn all about this with the DDT thing? I feel like we've been down this road before. - Lisa, AB

Photo credit: Brian Wolitski, April 2026, Foothills County, Alberta

Why wont these farmers ranchers do like they used to do pay a bounty of 25 cents for every gopher tail I rember as kids we used to visit a rancher we knew and he would take us out in the fields with twenty two rifles and shoot every gopher we saw never got rich but learned how to sight and shoot - James, AB

In my area west of Saskatoon where I have lived 55 years,and during that time from seeing so much wildlife when my father bought this land.We used to see so many owls,hear the mourning doves,the thrushes wings beating,the rabbits,prairies chickens,partridges,coyotes,foxes.Then in the 70's 80's turned into a dead planet.Nothing but mice and moles as all the natural preditors killed off.Now finally in the last three years these are coming back along with hawks,falcons,weasels and so wonderful! Why the hell would anyone in their right mind want to bring back strychnine?! The dogs and cats too in rural areas.I work in a vet clinic and the mouse poison cases are bad enough. - Tamara, Grandora, SK

There is good reason strychnine has been banned in the past. It is indiscriminately lethal for any animal consuming the food laced with it, including pets and all other animals it was unintended for. It also kills birds and other animals who consume the ones already poisoned. Wildlife has enough going against it between climate change and disappearing habitat like that which used to be on blind road allowances throughout the prairies, which is crown land that continues to disappear to cultivation. Strychnine use is unacceptable and must be banned Canada-wide. - Christopher, Gimli, MB

So disappointed in our Government. - Colleen

If you've ever seen a snowy owl dying of strychnine poisoning after eating poisoned gophers, you'd understand what a destructive, scattered, unmanageable approach this is. - Wilma

Stop eliminating the natural predators that control the population of these so called pests and their would be no need for poisoning them. - David

If folks would stop trapping, shooting and exterminating gopher's natural predators maybe this wouldn't be such a problem. By using poison people are condemning predators to death. Why can't you put a bounty on gophers like you do coyotes? If it works for coyotes (which is one of the natural predators) it can work for gophers without decimating other populations. It's so frustrating the way people don't think beyond the end of their nose. - Maria

It is disappointing that SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] doesn't acknowledge any risk, even though the research indicates non-target species die — ironically/tragically, many are gopher predators — and gopher populations are only reduced, not eliminated. The population reductions then set the stage for another boom cycle of gopher numbers, and the cycle continues, but with fewer predators — more poison, more non-target deaths, reduced gophers, then increased gophers and more poison. I do not deny the increase in gopher numbers the last several years. We have indeed witnessed that dynamic on our ranch. However, better understanding the ecology of the species and the related land management actions for long-term agriculture resilience is sorely lacking and does not seem to be a consideration for SARM. - Ross, southcentral SK (source: The Western Producer)