

Prairie Dog Shooting Information...

Thank you for your interest in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland (BGNG). The last full survey from 2015 showed the prairie dog population was down about **73%** since 2008 due to an outbreak of sylvatic plague. Since 2008 the Forest Service and interagency partners have been implementing a labor intensive flea control program to kill the fleas that carry the plague bacteria, on up to 10,000 acres within both the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and Badlands National Park. Anyone recreating on or working in or around prairie dogs should take precautions to learn about the symptoms of the plague and to know how to prevent becoming infected. An information flyer explaining more about the plague is enclosed. You may also contact the SD Department of Health or go online for more information.

The State of South Dakota does not have a specific hunting/shooting season for prairie dogs. Please contact the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for licensing information and regulations. Their address is: 20641 SD Hwy 1806, Ft. Pierre, SD 57532 or call them at 605-223-7700. However, there are areas closed to prairie dog shooting, please see enclosed map. These areas are strictly enforced due to personnel working in these areas, as well as the reintroduction of the Black Footed Ferret (endangered species,) in these areas. Separate Tribal licenses are required when shooting on Indian Reservations.

You must pick up your empty cartridge casings and leave no other material that is foreign to the area. If gates are closed when you approach, please close them immediately behind you. NEVER use any improvements such as fences, posts or signs as targets. Cattle and bison are present on the grasslands, so please be aware of their presence when shooting, as well as the proximity of nearby ranches and the traveling-public when discharging your firearms. When shooting always be aware how far your bullets might travel and that livestock, vehicles and other hikers may have wandered into your down-range shooting zone at any time.

Motorized travel within the Grassland boundary is confined to highways, county and township improved roads and Forest Service Designated Roads/Trails. The latter are two-track trails whose entry points on the National Grassland are marked with brown fiberglass numbered markers. You may notice other actively used two-tracks that are marked as "CLOSED". Closed two-tracks are for authorized maintenance personnel only, no public use allowed. The Motor Vehicle User's Map, (MVUM) which are available free to the public, shows road locations as well as providing details on the rules of travel. The MVUM can be viewed electronically and printed as a .pdf document at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska>. Click on Maps & Publications, then Motor Vehicle Use Maps and then scroll to Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Mobile users (Apple or Android device), the Forest Service road layer can be uploaded via PDFMaps (by Avenza), see the enclosed flyer for download information. A paper map is available upon request. The purpose of travel management is to reduce the wildfire danger during dry periods, lessen impacts to wildlife and vegetation, and minimizes conflicts between recreationists. During or following rain or snow, we advise travelers to stay on gravel or pavement and not to take their vehicles onto the Forest Service roads/trails. The soil is composed of "gumbo" clay which is very treacherous and sticky when wet.

Camping is allowed anywhere on the BGNG, although there are no developed sites or potable water. Car camping (or any motorized vehicle) is allowed no more than 30 ft. off of Designated Roads. Tent camping (non-motorized) is allowed anywhere you want to hike to. For more information on camping, please contact this office. We welcome you to stop by our office when you are in town. "Remember Safety First" and best wishes for an enjoyable visit to central South Dakota.

General Rules/Regulations:

- 1) No shooting inside the Badlands National Park, the Conata Basin or other areas marked close to shooting/hunting as shown on the maps.
- 2) SD Hunting Licenses are required on all private, state and federal lands, while Tribal Hunting Licenses are required on Tribal lands. Please contact the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for licensing information and regulations. Their address is: 20641 SD Hwy 1806, Ft. Pierre, SD 57532 or call them at 605-223-7700. Their Web site is <http://gfp.sd.gov>
- 3) Landowner permission is required to hunt on private lands.
- 4) Make sure you are on an approved Forest Service Road/Trail. (See Motor Vehicle Use Map, MVUM, or see mobile app. AVENZA.). Some “apparent trails” are temporary for maintenance or are for official use only trails and are not open to the public.
- 5) Off-road travel is only allowed in approved areas (see MVUM).
- 6) Please check with the local ranger district (605-279-2126) to see what fire restrictions are in place at the time of your arrival. There is also a Smokey Bear Fire Danger sign that is updated daily in front of the District Office in Wall. Generally, commercial petroleum-fueled or electric coil stoves and lanterns are permitted. During High to Extreme Fire Danger times, no open fires, flames or fire-pit use is allowed. Smoking is not allowed except within a vehicle, or building or in an area at least three feet in diameter cleared of all flammable materials.
- 7) Wildlife, buffalo/bison and livestock are unpredictable and can be dangerous! Be aware of your surroundings and your proximity to other animals. Rattlesnakes and stinging insects can be found across all types of terrain.
- 8) Be sure of your target. Black-Footed Ferrets, Burrowing Owls, Swift Fox and other highly protected animals should never be mistaken as a target.
- 9) YES, the plague can be transferred to humans and to your dogs... Never touch or handle prairie dog carcasses. See the enclosed fact sheet. You shouldn't approach a carcass. Immediately after death, body temperature begins to cool and after just a minor drop in degrees, the fleas jump off and begin looking for the next warm body to jump on to.
- 10) Make sure you read all information on the MVUM. It includes further information on vehicle use, dispersed camping, game retrieval, and emergency information, etc. ***“Please also be aware that road information on GPS units, Google Earth, etc. may not be current”.***

Please contact the Wall Range District Office if you have any questions, 605-279-2126, or stop by the office at 710 Main Street, Wall, SD 57790.

Most asked Questions:

- **Looking for the best places to hunt the Prairie Dogs?** See the enclosed abundance map, the Orange areas are the best.
- **Best time year to hunt?** Late spring to mid-summer. This is before they get too gun/people shy, and after the pups are born and are starting to emerge. Also have seen some good movement in the late fall, after the antelope and deer hunting seasons and the tourist season stops.
- **Best time of the day?** Early morning as the sun starts to warm the ground and early evening just before they disappear into their holes for the night. But from experience early morning is the best.
- **No Shooting Areas? How do I find out where that is? Why can't we shoot there?** There are areas in the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands that are closed to shooting prairie dogs. (See the enclosed Avenza download sheet, the enclosed Abundance Map, and the MVUM). The actual Closure Order is located at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/nebraska/alerts-notice>. These closures are tied to the reintroduction of the Black Footed Ferret, as well as personnel working in these areas.
- **Can we drive off road to the dog colonies/towns? Can we use motorbikes, ATV or UTVs to travel across the Grasslands?** No, driving is on designated roads only, as shown on the MVUM and the Avenza App. You are welcome to walk-in, bicycle, ride horse in most areas.
- **Do we really have to walk into the area, we want to hunt? It didn't use to be that way, we use to be able to drive where ever we wanted.** Sorry, but to protect the habitat for a variety of species' and to manage uncontrolled vehicle use, we only allow use on designated routes.
- **Are the private lands in the grasslands also open to anyone for prairie dog hunting?** The private land is just that private land. You will have to get permission from the landowner to shoot on or across their lands. Unless they are enrolled in the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks walk-in program, you will need to verify what species the walk-in area is open to. See the SDGFP Atlas.
- **How do I know whose land it is? How do I contact them?** You will have to contact the county for landownership questions. We only have control of the Federal lands. The local Chamber of Commerce may also be able to help.
- **Do you have a list of local landowners that would let us shoot on their land?** We do not/cannot maintain a list of local landowners. You can check with the local Chamber of Commerce.
- **Are there such things as guided prairie dog hunts?** Yes, there are some available on private lands, but there are no guided hunts allowed on the Buffalo National Grasslands.
- **Can I film my prairie dog hunt? Can I use a drone to film the hunt?** You can film your hunt for personal use but if you are going to post it, use for anything commercial, etc. you will need to acquire a special use permit to do so (can take 3-4 months to get and there is a fee). Use of a drone for any purpose is not authorized without a special use permit.
- **Why does the Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) stuff not match yours?** We try to update our information as soon as we see any changes. We try to make sure the SDGFP has all of our most current information and they try to make sure we have theirs. We are Federal and they are State.
- **Are any/all of the walk-in areas in the State open to prairie dog hunting?** Please get with the SDGFP for the most current info for these areas.
- **Can I prairie dog hunt in the Badlands National Park?** No.

- **Are there any big populations of prairie dogs anywhere else in the US, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, or Wyoming? What are their regulations on prairie dog hunting?** We really don't know for a fact where there are other large populations. We also do not keep apprised of all the regulations of the surrounding states. Please call that specific state's Game and Fish agencies/services.
- **Do these other states have the plague also?** We really don't know for sure what the extent of the outbreak is in the other states, but we do know that most of the states around us have had or do have an outbreak of the plague. Please call that specific state's Game and Fish agencies/services for more information.
- **Can I hunt on the local Reservations? What do I have to do to be able to hunt on the Reservation? Who do I contact?** The Reservations have their own rules and regulations besides the State regulations. Please contact the Tribal Fish and Game Office for the Reservation you would like to hunt.
- **Can I camp anywhere I want?** Yes, you can disperse camp anywhere on the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands, but you should only pull off the road about 30 feet. But you can walk into where ever you would like, to pitch a tent. It is not advisable to put off too much more than 30 feet due to the gumbo type soil. Reference the MVUM for more info. FS Road 7129 is not a good place to pull off of.
- **Can I pull my trailer off road? Can I park my 5th wheel on the Road? Will I be able to get it out?** Yes, but only 30 feet. Check conditions, there are some areas on the grasslands that could accommodate a 5th wheel. Be sure to check the exact area you want to park in, if it was recently wet, you may want to park elsewhere as the trailer will sink into the gumbo soil and may become stuck. Always check the MVUM for disperse camping rules, parking rules, and turning around. Talk with the local Forest Service Office for these areas as well as the MVUM. Do not leave any vehicle blocking any road, this is a good way to get it damaged and ticketed.
- **Do you have Campsites with water and electrical hookups? Where are the nearest ones? Do your campsites need to have reservations?** We have no designated campsites and no water or electricity hook ups are available. Please check with the local Chamber of Commerce to see what may be available with in the local area.
- **Can I have a campfire/fire ring/fire pit? Why not?** Yes, unless there are fire restrictions, in place. Please check with the local Ranger District Office to see if there are any restrictions at the time you will be arriving/camping.

Protect yourself from plague



What is plague?

Plague occurs naturally in the western United States, particularly Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico. The plague bacterium (*Yersinia pestis*) is transmitted by fleas and cycles naturally among wild rodents. Plague can also infect humans and their pets.

How do people get plague?

- Bites of infected fleas
- Touching or skinning infected animals (such as prairie dogs, squirrels, rats, and rabbits)
- Inhaling droplets from the cough of an infected person or animal (especially sick cats)

Common forms of plague

Bubonic plague is the most common form of plague. It usually occurs after the bite of an infected flea. The key feature of bubonic plague is a swollen, painful lymph node, usually in the groin, armpit or neck. Other symptoms include fever, chills, headache, and extreme exhaustion. A person usually becomes ill with bubonic plague 1 to 6 days after being infected. If not treated early, the bacteria can spread to other parts of the body and cause septicemic or pneumonic plague.

Septicemic plague occurs when plague bacteria multiply in the bloodstream. Symptoms include high fever, exhaustion, light-headedness, and abdominal pain. Septicemic plague can quickly cause shock and organ failure.

Pneumonic plague occurs when plague bacteria infect the lungs. Symptoms include high fever, chills, cough, difficulty breathing, and coughing up bloody mucus. Pneumonic plague is almost always fatal if not treated rapidly.

If you develop symptoms of plague, see a health care provider immediately.

Plague can be treated successfully with antibiotics, but an infected person must be treated promptly to avoid serious complications or death.

Protect yourself if you live in an area where plague occurs:

Protect you and your family

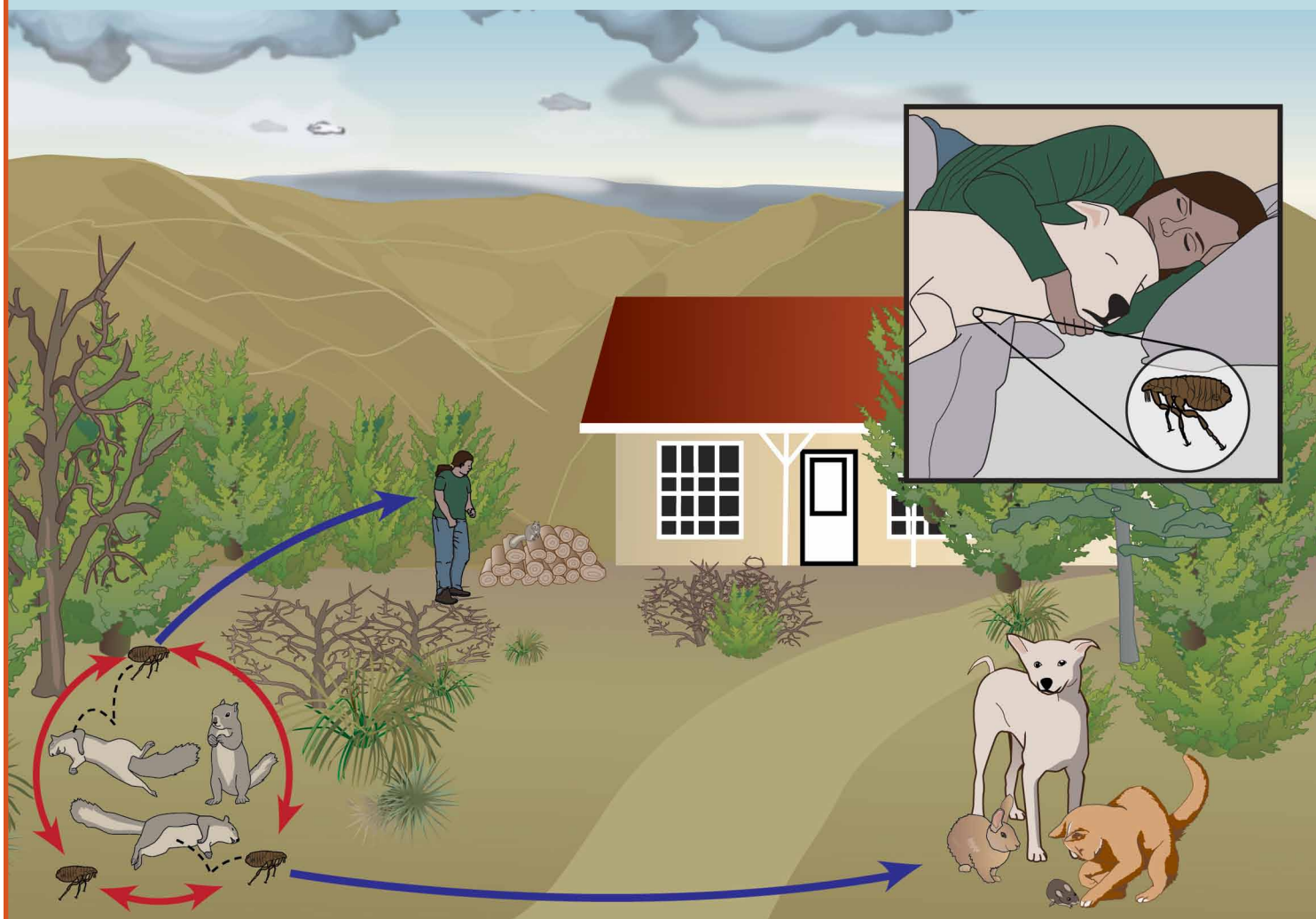
1. Eliminate nesting places for rodents around homes, sheds, garages, and recreation areas by removing brush, rock piles, trash, and excess firewood.
2. Avoid picking up or touching dead animals.
3. Wear gloves if you must handle sick or dead animals.
4. Report sick or dead animals to the local health department or law enforcement officials.
5. Do not let pets sleep in the bed with you. This has been shown to increase your risk of getting plague.
6. Use insect repellent that contains DEET to prevent flea bites.

Protect your pets

1. Treat dogs and cats for fleas regularly.
2. Keep pet food in rodent-proof containers.
3. Take sick pets to the veterinarian promptly.
4. Do not allow pets to hunt or roam in rodent habitat, such as prairie dog colonies.

Plague in Humans

Human plague is often preceded by an outbreak or “epizootic” in which large numbers of susceptible rodents die. When this happens, hungry infected fleas leave the dead rodents and seek blood from other hosts, including humans and domestic pets. Studies suggest that in the southwestern U.S. epizootics are more likely to occur during cooler summers that follow wet winters.



Humans and domestic animals that are bitten by fleas from dead animals are at risk for contracting plague, especially during an epizootic. Cats usually become very ill from plague and can directly infect humans when they cough infectious droplets into the air. Dogs are less likely to be ill, but they can still bring plague-infected fleas into the home. In addition to flea bites, people can be exposed while handling skins or flesh of infected animals.

For more information, please contact:

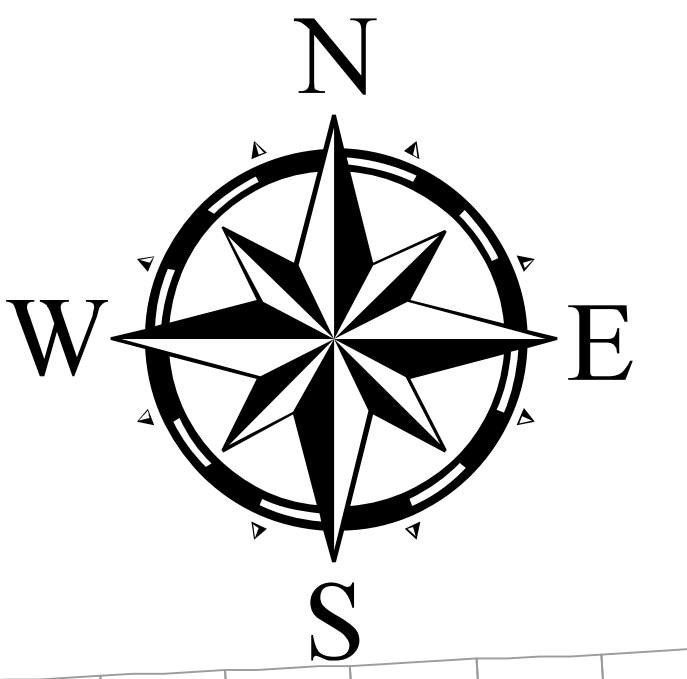
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

3156 Rampart Road, Fort Collins, CO 80521

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348

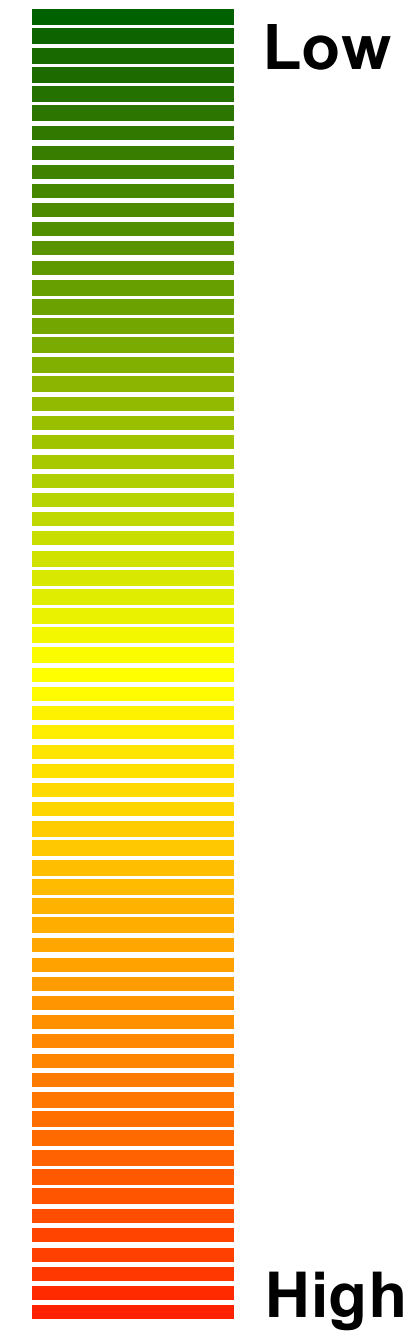
Web: www.cdc.gov

Wall Ranger District 2016 Prairie Dog Relative Abundance Map



Legend

Prairie Dog
Relative Abundance



Prairie Dog Colony Within
Boundary Management Zone

Prairie Dog
Shooting Closure Area

2 1 0 2 4 6 8 10 Miles

