



BOTSTIBER INSTITUTE
FOR WILDLIFE FERTILITY CONTROL

Fertility Control to Mitigate Human-Wildlife Conflicts

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Use of fertility control to manage urban prairie dog populations

Dan Salkeld; Jackson Runte; Aaron Shiels; Douglas Eckery; Gary Witmer

Animal populations co-existing with urban human populations raise many issues, including conservation, public health, impacts upon habitats and property, and people connecting with nature. Black-tailed prairie dogs are a 'keystone species' for ecological health in the western US, but colonies can expand and over-graze, causing concerns for local land-owners. Lethal control is difficult, can be distressing to local stake-holders, and may not be effective if populations rebound rapidly or reinvade.

We investigated the potential of an immunocontraceptive – GonaCon – to humanely and sustainably manage prairie dog populations by reducing breeding success. We used three matched pairs of sites – one site where we vaccinated adult female prairie dogs with GonaCon, and one site where we administered a sham vaccine – in Fort Collins and Denver, Colorado. Visual measures of reproductive output (number of offspring emerging from adult female's burrows) were significantly lower in Gonacon-treated sites.