

## CONSERVATION CORNER

### Wyoming Ground Squirrels

The Wyoming ground squirrel, also known as Richardson's ground squirrel, is found in Colorado, southern Wyoming, western Nebraska and Utah. They prefer green grasses, forbes and shrubs, during dry months the squirrels eat dry grasses, seeds, insects and eggs from ground nesting birds. The Wyoming ground squirrel is causing extensive damage to crops and open range forage in Northwest Colorado, grazing the crops and rangeland down to the dirt. The squirrels not only eat the forage above ground, they eat the root system from below ground.

Timing is the key to controlling the Wyoming ground squirrels. They are above ground for several months and then during the hottest summer months they go below ground where it is cooler. Late summer they make a short appearance before going underground for the winter.

There are several methods for the management of Wyoming ground squirrels. A combination of control methods is best. Habitat modification, predators, exclusion, trapping, shooting, and chemical control. Baits don't work well when green grass is available and fumigants typically don't work well when the ground is dry.

The economic damage caused by the Wyoming ground squirrels is a serious problem, especially when the concentration of squirrels is high. The squirrels compete with livestock and wildlife for forage and destroy food crops as well. The burrow mounds they make in hay fields cause damage to haying equipment and take fields out of production. Burrowing also damages grasslands, golf courses, parks and lawns. Squirrels also are a host to fleas and can act as carriers for the bubonic plague which is transmitted to humans via flea bites.

For more information on Wyoming ground squirrels please scan the QR code for CSU Extension Fact Sheet or call Jane at Rio Blanco County Weed Dept at (970) 878-9670.

