

## RICHARDSON'S GROUND SQUIRREL



### DESCRIPTION

Ground squirrels measure 9 - 11 inches, and their semi-bushy tail adds another 5 - 11 inches in length. They are brownish-gray in colour and speckled with off-white along the back; the sides of the head and shoulders are light gray to whitish.

### HABITS

Richardson Ground Squirrels are generally active during the day in spring and summer months. Females tend to be territorial and will defend their nesting sites. They are mainly found in the southern areas of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Ground squirrels have two periods of dormancy

during the year. During winter months most ground squirrels hibernate, but some young can be active at this time, particularly in areas where winters aren't severe. During the hottest times of the year most adults go into a period of inactivity that can last a few days to a week or more. During these periods, the burrow appears open at the entrance, but the squirrel plugs it with soil near the nest.

- **Feeding:** Richardson Ground Squirrels are herbivores. This means they eat just grasses and plants. As the season changes they will move to seeds, grains or other plant material and store them in their burrows for the hibernation over winter. Ground squirrels usually forage close to their burrows, within a 75-yard radius of their burrow.
- **Hibernation:** Richardson Ground Squirrels start hibernation between July and September, with males emerging from hibernation in March, followed by females a couple of weeks later.
- **Nesting:** As the spring time temperatures creep up and the ground gets warmer, mounds of dirt start appearing in fields, backyards, or ditches. Their burrows and range is small and there can be many mounds in fields and open spaces, as they like to see any predators coming.
- **Reproduction:** Females produce one litter per year, with an average of 6 – 8 young being born in the springtime. Young ground squirrels remain underground in the burrow until they are approximately 30 days old, emerging from burrows late May to mid-June, weather dependent. At six months of age young resemble adults.



## CONTROL

Controlling Richardson's Ground Squirrels can be done by using properly labelled and registered rodenticides, trapping, asphyxiation via Giant Destroyers, or by shooting.

- **Rodenticides** are various types of baits that rodents can feed on in their burrows. Rodenticides are an effective tool in non-residential areas as the bait is inside the hole and the hole is covered up, to see if the bait worked or not if the hole is dug out. Bait is to be placed directly into the burrow and the hole or mound is covered with soil. Once the rodent has eaten enough bait the rodents will die within its burrow removing the chances of secondary poisoning of pets and other species.
- **Trapping** is another method that will reduce these pests in areas that are not of a fine-turf. The gopher will be trapped inside the hole. Frequent inspections are necessary to use this type of method.
- **Asphyxiation** via Giant Destroyers. If the burrows are at least 5 metres away from any foundation or the building foot print, you can purchase an over the counter product called Giant Destroyer. This product looks like a little piece of dynamite which is lit with a wick and then placed into the burrows chamber and covered with dirt. The Giant Destroyer will release enough sulfur dioxide gas into the burrow to rid your location of these pests.
  - 1) Fill in most, not all, ground squirrel/gopher holes with dirt.
  - 2) Light Giant Destroyers (like a stick of dynamite) and drop them in the remaining holes.
  - 3) Cover up the holes. If you see smoke coming from a hole, you may have missed one.
  - 4) If you notice in a day or so that the Giant Destroyers have been pushed out, you might want to redo the application, as they might not have been in the hole far enough.

**DO NOT USE THIS METHOD IF THE HOLES ARE CLOSE TO A HOME.** Giant Destroyers use a sulphur gas that can permeate through foundations, so if there is a risk that the holes are too close, do not use them!

- **Shooting** can also be effective for removing rodents but only where it is lawful.
- Please do not use water hoses to fill up burrows.

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