

Early Season Ground Squirrel Management

Kathy Kelley Anderson, UCCE Farm Advisor, Stanislaus County

Ground Squirrels

Controlling adult ground squirrels before they reproduce in the spring is a critical part of good management. Optimal time for control is during the breeding season when both males and females have emerged from hibernation. At this time, a majority of the squirrels are aboveground foraging for food and breeding.

Burrow fumigation is the method of choice at this time of year when squirrels feed on green vegetation and are not interested in baited grains. A fumigant program followed by anticoagulant baiting in the summer can control 90% of the population. Squirrels typically breed from late January to early March, but the time may vary with the weather and location. For the best results, use burrow fumigants about three weeks after the first squirrels emerge from hibernation. Read the label carefully and follow directions and label rates. Applying more fumigant than recommended to each burrow does not increase control. Fumigation of holes with aluminum phosphide is prohibited within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling. A fumigation management is required.

Save material and labor costs by treating only active burrows. Shovel holes or drag middles and edge areas to cover burrow openings and treat only those that are re-opened. Fumigate following rain or irrigation since soil moisture is necessary to release the gas. The best timing is early morning or evening when ground squirrels are most likely to be inside the burrows. Check all treated burrows a couple of days after fumigation and retreat any that have opened. More information can be found on the UC ground squirrel best management practices website at <http://groups.ucanr.org/gsbmp>.