

Summer, 2018

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Keeping Landscapes Working

*A Newsletter for Managers
of Bay Area Rangelands*

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Summer, 2018 In This Issue

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Workshop: Ground Squirrel and Gopher Management
Tuesday, September 11, 2018, San Jose



The California Ground Squirrel

One hundred years ago, the governor of California, William Stephens proclaimed the last week of April as "Squirrel Week." He directed everyone "to do their utmost to relieve the country of all ground squirrel pests." "Children, we must kill the squirrels to save food but use poisons carefully," announced a poster for a school contest during the week. Cash prizes were offered to schoolchildren, who were provided with buckets of barley soaked in strychnine to poison and collect the dead rodents. The campaign was not successful. Control efforts have continued over the past 100 years and have been inextricably linked to

the state's economic development. Today, the California ground squirrel persists as both a pest and a keystone species.

As a pest, public work managers, farmers, ranchers, and other land managers struggle to maintain the use of effective, legal control methods to prevent loss of crops and damage to infrastructure. As a keystone species, providing food (prey) for some special status species and providing housing (burrows) for others, public work managers, farmers, ranchers, and other land managers must consider when to protect them. Most people have no idea that ground squirrel control is an ongoing issue for many land managers. So when should we control them and when should we protect them?

Upcoming Events

GROUND SQUIRREL AND GOPHER MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP



When: Tuesday
September 11
10:00 A.M. - 3:00 p.m.

Where: [Emma Prusch Park](#)
Multicultural Center
647 King Rd, San Jose

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Have ground squirrels and gophers taken over your farm, park or rangeland?

Learn how Integrated Pest Management practices can be applied to help **control** these common pests, with a special focus on organic methods.

Featured speaker, UCCE Human-Wildlife Interactions Advisor Niamh Quinn, Ph.D., will discuss common challenges to controlling these small mammals, as well as share successful management approaches being used in the region.

Lunch provided
Continuing Education credits available

This workshop is co-sponsored by the Santa Clara County Division of Agriculture & UCCE Santa Clara County

Articles

A Brief History of Ground Squirrel Control Efforts in California By Sheila Barry

Commonly found dashing in and out of burrows in grasslands throughout California and parts of Washington and Oregon, the California ground squirrel was a resource for the area's first peoples. It provided both food and fur for some Native American tribes. But soon after the arrival of Spaniards and Mexicans and the growing of crops, squirrel populations exploded, and it was labeled a destructive pest.

In the early 1900s, UC Berkeley zoologists Joseph Grinnell and Joseph Dixon attributed the superabundant population of ground squirrels to humans "upset[ting] the primitive balance of things." They wrote that human activities cause some native species to disappear, while others tend to increase and spread, finding conditions for their existence to be improved through man's activities. Squirrels, they noted, have benefitted from "human invasion." People killed their predators like hawks, eagles, coyotes and badgers and cultivated plentiful, new food sources in farm fields.

But a thriving rodent population was not compatible with the state's economic development. Fearing

destruction to crops or property, Californians set out to eradicate or at least control ground squirrels. For nearly 50 years, beginning in the mid-1800s, the state legislature authorized counties to pay for each squirrel tail brought in by a bounty hunter. Claims were paid on millions of their tails.

[<Article continues>](#)

For more information on Best Management Practices and Developing an **Integrated Pest Management Program** see:

UC ANR website: Ground Squirrel BMPs

<http://www.groundsquirrelbmp.com/>

UC IPM Pest Management Guidelines

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/r107600411.html>

UC IPM Pests in the Urban Landscape

<http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=26203>

Understanding Livestock Grazing Impacts: Grazing Annual Grasslands and Ground Squirrels

http://grazingimpacts.info/indicators/selected_indicator.php?INDICATORID=CAL191

This newsletter is provided by the UC Cooperative Extension Natural Resources Program in the San Francisco Bay Area and provides information to managers of both public and private rangelands. RANGELAND, which is land characterized by natural vegetation i.e., grass, forbs and shrubs and managed as a natural ecosystem, is the predominate source of OPEN SPACE in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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