

INBOX

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Each day, a letter that expresses a view particularly well is featured on Q.
Each month, one outstanding letter will be chosen for a special prize.



Calgary Herald Archive

Readers say poisoning Richardson ground squirrels further contaminates the food chain.

City should 'gopher' more humane way

POISON • Re: "Saskatchewan ranchers say gopher epidemic destroying land," May 10.

When we moved to Calgary, we were surprised to see how the Richardson ground squirrels, cousins to the prairie dog, have adapted to life in the city. Sadly, the city poisons them because they're considered pests.

They occupy less than one per cent of the land they occupied a century ago. They only have one litter per year with an average of six or eight pups and many do not survive. They don't spread the plague. They

are an important source of food for other birds and animals.

Our concern is the city's practice of poisoning the ground squirrels with Rozol, which causes them to die in pain from internal bleeding. The crows eat the remains left out in the open so the food chain is further contaminated.

When the nursing mothers are killed, the pups starve to death. The city has applied poison without warning, so perhaps small children and pets are at risk as well.

If there is a threat to public

health, then action is required, but has the city investigated whether less environmentally intrusive and more humane methods are options? Ald. Ric McIver has not responded to our two letters on this issue.

Even ground squirrels deserve distance and respect. Remember what is current may not be the future state. The Vancouver Island marmot is a housecat-sized ground squirrel that is endemic only to Vancouver Island, and is nearly extinct.

Graham and Angela Paul, Calgary