

Prairie Dog Shooting Information

Thank you for your interest in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland (BGNG). The last full survey from 2015 showed the prairie dog population was down about **73%** since 2008 due to an outbreak of sylvatic plague. Since 2008 the Forest Service and interagency partners have been implementing a labor intensive flea control program to kill the fleas that carry the plague bacteria, on up to 10,000 acres within both the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and Badlands National Park. Anyone recreating on or working in or around prairie dogs should take precautions to learn about the symptoms of the plague and to know how to prevent becoming infected. An information flyer explaining more about the plague is enclosed. You may also contact the SD Department of Health or go online for more information.

The State of South Dakota does not have a specific hunting/shooting season for prairie dogs. Please contact the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for licensing information and regulations. Their address is: 20641 SD Hwy 1806, Ft. Pierre, SD 57532 or call them at 605-223-7700. However, there are areas closed to prairie dog shooting, please see enclosed map. These areas are strictly enforced due to personnel working in these areas, as well as the reintroduction of the Black Footed Ferret (endangered species,) in these areas. Separate Tribal licenses are required when shooting on Indian Reservations.

You must pick up your empty cartridge casings and leave no other material that is foreign to the area. If gates are closed when you approach, please close them immediately behind you. NEVER use any improvements such as fences, posts or signs as targets. Cattle and bison are present on the grasslands, so please be aware of their presence when shooting, as well as the proximity of nearby ranches and the traveling-public when discharging your firearms. When shooting always be aware how far your bullets might travel and that livestock, vehicles and other hikers may have wandered into your down-range shooting zone at any time.

Motorized travel within the Grassland boundary is confined to highways, county and township improved roads and Forest Service Designated Roads/Trails. The latter are two-track trails whose entry points on the National Grassland are marked with brown fiberglass numbered markers. You may notice other actively used two-tracks that are marked as "CLOSED". Closed two-tracks are for authorized maintenance personnel only, no public use allowed. The Motor Vehicle User's Map, (MVUM) which are available free to the public, shows road locations as well as providing details on the rules of travel. The MVUM can be viewed electronically and printed as a .pdf document at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska>. Click on Maps & Publications, then Motor Vehicle Use Maps and then scroll to Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Mobile users (Apple or Android device), the Forest Service road layer can be uploaded via PDFMaps (by Avenza), see the enclosed flyer for download information. A paper map is available upon request. The purpose of travel management is to reduce the wildfire danger during dry periods, lessen impacts to wildlife and vegetation, and minimizes conflicts between recreationists. During or following rain or snow, we advise travelers to stay on gravel or pavement and not to take their vehicles onto the Forest Service roads/trails. The soil is composed of "gumbo" clay which is very treacherous and sticky when wet.

Camping is allowed anywhere on the BGNG, although there are no developed sites or potable water. Car camping (or any motorized vehicle) is allowed no more than 30 ft. off of Designated Roads. Tent camping (non-motorized) is allowed anywhere you want to hike to. For more information on camping, please contact this office. We welcome you to stop by our office when you are in town. "Remember Safety First" and best wishes for an enjoyable visit to central South Dakota.

General Rules/Regulations:

- 1) No shooting inside the Badlands National Park, the Conata Basin or other areas marked close to shooting/hunting as shown on the maps.
- 2) SD Hunting Licenses are required on all private, state and federal lands, while Tribal Hunting Licenses are required on Tribal lands. Please contact the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for licensing information and regulations. Their address is: 20641 SD Hwy 1806, Ft. Pierre, SD 57532 or call them at 605-223-7700. Their Web site is <http://gfp.sd.gov>
- 3) Landowner permission is required to hunt on private lands.
- 4) Make sure you are on an approved Forest Service Road/Trail. (See Motor Vehicle Use Map, MVUM, or see mobile app. AVENZA.). Some “apparent trails” are temporary for maintenance or are for official use only trails and are not open to the public.
- 5) Off-road travel is only allowed in approved areas (see MVUM).
- 6) Please check with the local ranger district (605-279-2126) to see what fire restrictions are in place at the time of your arrival. There is also a Smokey Bear Fire Danger sign that is updated daily in front of the District Office in Wall. Generally, commercial petroleum-fueled or electric coil stoves and lanterns are permitted. During High to Extreme Fire Danger times, no open fires, flames or fire-pit use is allowed. Smoking is not allowed except within a vehicle, or building or in an area at least three feet in diameter cleared of all flammable materials.
- 7) Wildlife, buffalo/bison and livestock are unpredictable and can be dangerous! Be aware of your surroundings and your proximity to other animals. Rattlesnakes and stinging insects can be found across all types of terrain.
- 8) Be sure of your target. Black-Footed Ferrets, Burrowing Owls, Swift Fox and other highly protected animals should never be mistaken as a target.
- 9) YES, the plague can be transferred to humans and to your dogs... Never touch or handle prairie dog carcasses. See the enclosed fact sheet. You shouldn't approach a carcass. Immediately after death, body temperature begins to cool and after just a minor drop in degrees, the fleas jump off and begin looking for the next warm body to jump on to.
- 10) Make sure you read all information on the MVUM. It includes further information on vehicle use, dispersed camping, game retrieval, and emergency information, etc. ***“Please also be aware that road information on GPS units, Google Earth, etc. may not be current”.***

Please contact the Wall Range District Office if you have any questions, 605-279-2126, or stop by the office at 710 Main Street, Wall, SD 57790.