

GROUND SQUIRREL CONTROL IN SOUTHWEST UTAH

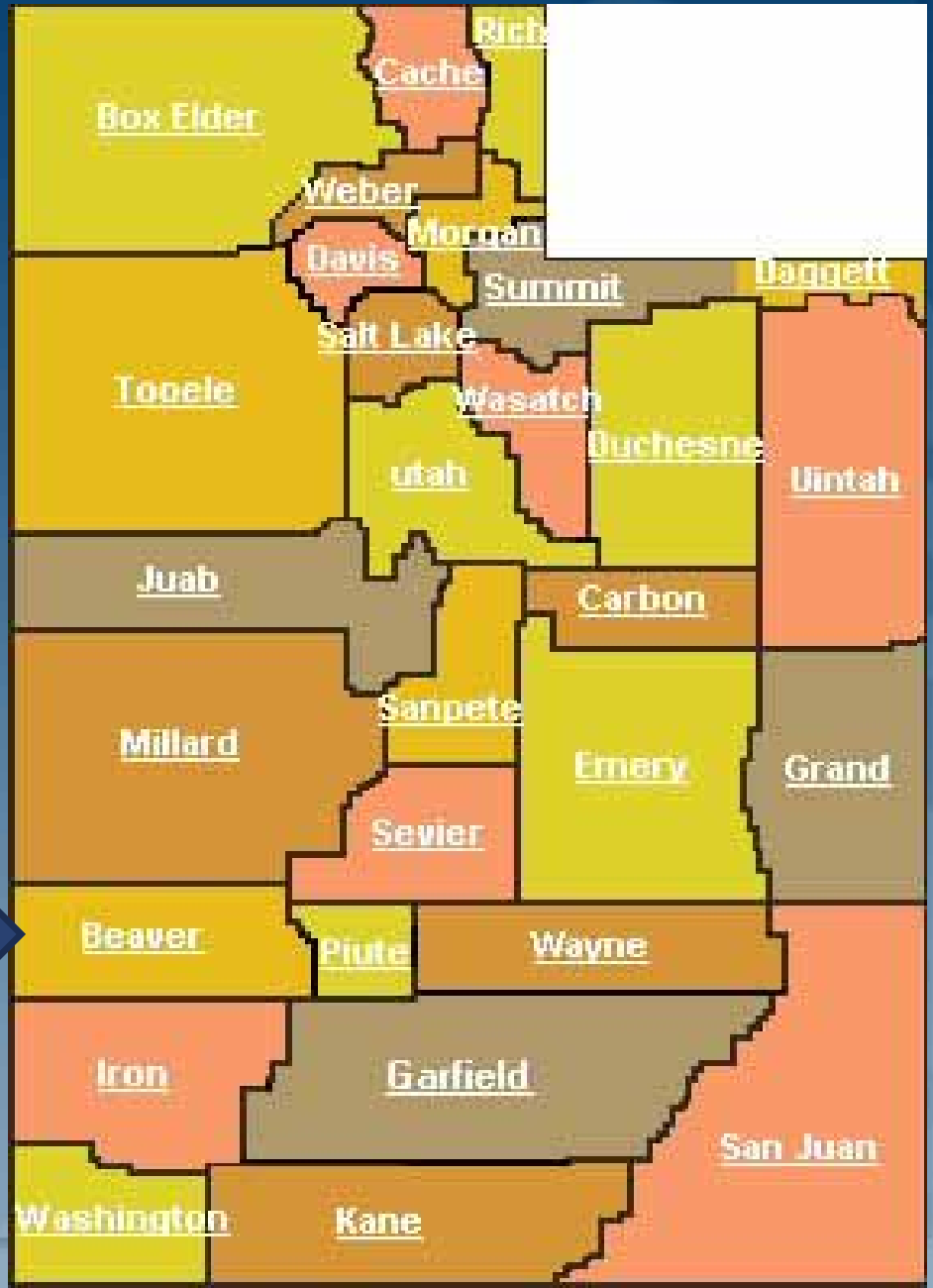
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Utah

Beaver County



Beaver County

- ∞ Beaver County is a rural county with a population of 6500.
- ∞ Over 21,000 acres of alfalfa hay is raised in the county annually.
- ∞ The majority of this high quality alfalfa is sold to the dairies in southern California.



Townsend Ground Squirrel



- ∞ Is a small gray squirrel found in Nevada and Western Utah.
- ∞ It eats alfalfa, grasses and other agronomic crops.
- ∞ They breed in March and have litters of 8-10 babies in April.

∞ Hundreds of acres of alfalfa ground in western Beaver County are currently infested.

∞ The problem has increased substantially the last few years.





The squirrels are costing farmers over \$100,000 each year.

They started out just infesting the fence lines but now are covering the whole fields.

Current control programs were not taking care of the problem.





- ∞ Once the alfalfa greens up it is hard to get the squirrels to eat the bait.
- ∞ Shooting is fun but very time consuming.
- ∞ Flooding and fumigating are effective but very time consuming



For the past two years we have held a series of public meetings to educate land owners on the best way to control the squirrels.

Dr. Terry Mesmer, USU Extension Wildlife Specialist, has helped us implement a new baiting program where we could get better control by applying a pre-bait and then a bait before the alfalfa greens up.

∞ To determine the effectiveness of the prebaiting program we set up a trial where we compared the effects of no baiting, baiting, and prebaiting.





∞ We selected 12 plots, 3 each in 4 different farmers fields. Each plot was 150 ft X 150 ft and at least 1000 ft from each other.



Each treatment consisted of a plot that was prebaited with oats and then baited with zinc phosphide,

1 plot baited with zinc phosphide without prebaiting

1 control plot that received no treatment.

Squirrel Observations

- ∞ Each plot was observed each day for 3 days before any baiting took place
- ∞ The plots were observed for another 3 days after the treatments were applied.



∞ The prebait and bait was applied to the plots using a hand spreader.



Farmers are able to use 4 wheelers to spread the bait quickly and effectively



Beaver County treated all of the county right a ways



Results of the ground squirrel control trial – 2009 & 2010

	Before baiting	After Baiting	% Change	
Control 2009	5.4 squirrels	3.6 squirrels	33%	
2010	6.3	4.3	32%	32.5
Bait Only 2009	8.3 squirrels	3.4 squirrels	59%	
2010	6.3	3.3	52%	55.5
Prebait – Bait 09	10.7 squirrels	2.7 squirrels	75%	
2010	6.9	2.3	66%	71%

Follow up survey of farmers on the Milford Flat

- ∞ The farmers who returned surveys estimated that they spent over \$17,000 controlling squirrels.
- ∞ 52% of the farmers tried the pre-baiting, baiting program.
- ∞ The majority of the farmers feel like this new baiting program really lowered the number of squirrels this past year.



Questions

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