

Resolution 11-23: Loss of 2 per cent Liquid Strychnine

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST that Health Canada and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency make 2% Liquid Strychnine available to agricultural producers to utilize on their farms for control of Richardson's Ground Squirrels through an emergency registration for the 2023 season and until an alternative single feed product is available.

FURTHER THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST that Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation study alternative products in part with Health Canada and Pest Management Regulatory Agency to replace 2% liquid Strychnine with a viable single feed alternative product that is classified as safe and effective for the control of Richardson ground squirrels.

Response:

In 2020, Health Canada and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) deregistered two per cent Liquid Strychnine Concentrate for the control Richardson ground squirrel (gophers). This decision was made to address significant environmental concerns and risks to wildlife caused by secondary poisonings. March 4, 2023, was the last day two per cent Liquid Strychnine Concentrate could be used for gopher control.

In 2021, the Alberta government filed a Notice of Objection regarding this decision. On February 3, 2023, the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation wrote to the federal government to request a reversal of the decision. The letter stated that the loss of this pesticide could cost hay and pasture producers nearly \$800 million per year. The Minister also advised that with no viable alternative to control Richardson's ground squirrel, the decision will create immense pressure for producers and potentially exacerbate the food affordability and security crisis.

Furthermore, Agriculture and Irrigation officials have engaged Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) officials on this issue to press AAFC to support producers in the transition to alternatives. AGI expects that a key element of this transitional support would be federal compensation to cover crop losses and cost differentials of using alternative pesticides.

The Government of Saskatchewan conducted an evaluation of available alternatives, including zinc phosphide products, ZP Rodent Oat Bait and Burrow Oat Bait. Some evidence indicated these alternatives might be as effective as strychnine, and less expensive. In spring 2022, the Government of Alberta conducted a similar evaluation; however, conclusive evidence was not available due to inclement spring weather. Alberta hopes to conduct a similar evaluation again this year.