March 18,

Atten: Philip Chao

RE: CDC/FDA ban on prairie dogs, docket number 2004N-0049

It has been rumored that the CDC and FDA are now blaming each other for the inability to close out the interim rule, because each is waiting on the other for necessary information and everything seems to be at a stalemate.

It has also been leaked by some officials, that the FDA has no intention of lifting the ban--even on prairie dogs. Regardless of the fact, that black tailed prairie dogs are a threatened native species that cannot become infected with monkeypox, without first being exposed to an infected imported animal. The mind set seems to be an unwillingness by the FDA to spend time and resources to regulate the movement of prairie dogs, (either as pets or for relocation efforts in the wild), in order to placate Joe Citizen, grandma Jones, and a naïve public, so they can feel safe and protected. Never mind the fact that it would be virtually impossible for them to catch monkeypox from an uninfected prairie dog.

Conversely, how much time and resources does the FDA want to spend on regulating the movement or prairie dogs acquired as pets, underground, and against the law, if the ban remains permanent? Many good tax paying citizens, with a conscience, will rescue prairie dogs and bring them into their homes illegally, rather than see them killed. What is the FDA prepared to do to these good hearted citizens? Arrest them? Send them to jail? Confiscate their pet prairie dogs and euthanize them? Fine them huge amounts of money? Harass and intimidate them in their own homes? How does the FDA think Joe Citizen, grandma Jones, and a naïve public will feel about that? How will the media view these actions by the government, when rescuing prairie dogs from being poisoned, shot, and bull dozed, does not pose any risk to human health?

The simple common sense solution, would be to ban the importation of any animal, (particularly African imports), who may be likely to infect our native species with a variety of known diseases, such as monkeypox. If the option of rescuing prairie dogs from the wild to become pets, is taken off the table by the FDA ban, it will push the species even closer to extinction, than they are currently. Lifting the ban is not only the right thing to do, it is the responsible and humane thing to do.

Jean Williams
President
Creating GreenPiece.com
253-939-9667

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