

**Subject:** Capture Methods of Prairie Dogs Policy #27

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**References:** AWA Section 13  
9 CFR, Part 2, Section 2.131(a)(1), and Section 2.126

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**History:** Provides requested guidance. Replaces Policy #27 dated February 9, 2001. Policy #27 dated February 9, 2001 corrected typographical error in the first sentence under Policy: from “9 CFR, Part 2, Section 2.13(a)(1), to 9 CFR, Part 2, Section 2.131(a)(1).” Policy #27, dated November 17, 2000, replaced previous Policy #27 dated February 23, 1999.

**Justification:** Additions to this policy clarify the use of water and alternative methods for capturing prairie dogs, and adds the requirement for an itinerary. Methods used to capture prairie dogs from natural habitats for covered purposes must be done in a humane manner.

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**Policy:** As required by Section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and further explained in 9 CFR, Part 2, Section 2.131(a)(1), handling of animals must be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort. The introduction of chemicals or noxious gas into prairie dog burrows will be considered a violation of Section 2.131(a)(1).

Capture methods for prairie dogs must be approved by the Animal Care Regional Director. The licensee or applicant must request approval by providing a detailed written description of the methods of capture. Changes in the capture method used by a licensee will also require approval. An Animal Care Inspector or Veterinary Medical Officer must validate that the described method does not cause unnecessary discomfort, harm or behavioral stress to the animal. Possible signs of distress with any capture method may include agitation, sneezing, coughing or difficulty breathing. The animal should remain bright, alert and free from any injuries after capture. Normal behaviors should be displayed by the animal soon after capture.

The use of water is not necessarily prohibited by this policy if such use complies with Section 2.131(a)(1). The water must be natural water (without added chemicals or noxious gas) that is introduced into a burrow at a temperature, volume, and speed that does not harm or distress the prairie dogs.

The use of certain vacuum equipment is not necessarily prohibited by this policy if such use complies with Section 2.131(a)(1). The vacuum method

must assure that minimal suction pressure is used and the animal travels a short distance from the burrow to catch basket and is quickly removed from the catch basket upon capture.

Live trapping of prairie dogs must only be done with humane traps that do not injure the prairie dog upon capture. The traps must be checked with sufficient frequency to assure that the animal does not go without food, water or shelter for an unnecessary period of time.

To comply with 9 CFR, Section 2.126, an itinerary of capture dates and sites must be provided to the appropriate Animal Care Regional Office at least two days prior to collection.

