

November 19, 2003

Philip L. Chao
Office of Policy and Planning (HF-23)
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane,
Rockville, MD 20857

8893 '03 DEC -9 P1:40

Re: Prairie Dog Ban, [Docket No. 2003N - 0400] RIN 0910 - ZA21

To Mr. Chao:

I am asking for your help in regard to the protection of my personal freedom. There is currently a temporary ban on prairie dogs—along with other animals—which inhibits the capture, offer to capture, transport, offer to transport, sale, barter, exchange, or offer to sell, barter, or exchange, distribute, offer to distribute, or release into the environment. This temporary ban was enacted in May 2003, in response to the outbreak of monkey pox, which only caused a few illnesses and no deaths. The disease was brought into the country via an African Gambian Rat that was legally brought into the country with no quarantine measures taken.

While the temporary ban itself was understandable, the continuance of the ban is not. The prairie dog did not bring monkey pox into the country and were only included in the ban because the distributor that imported the African Gambian Rat happened to also have some prairie dogs. In fact, monkey pox has been under control and eradicated from the US. The need for this ban no longer even exists.

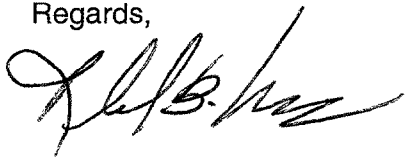
Many of the prairie dogs that have been cared for by responsible people have been seized from their homes, and the wording of the ban enables the Federal Drug Administration to do so legally. The verbiage is to "take other actions as necessary to prevent the spread of monkey pox virus"; since monkey pox is no longer an issue with prairie dogs, the ban should be lifted. This leads into more invasive issues than just removal of the animal; the regulation goes on to include things like fumigation, pest extermination and destruction of animals or articles "believed to be sources of infection." If appropriate controls were exercised regarding quarantine of imported animals, the need for any of this regulation would be gone.

The Center for Disease Control initially concurred with the *temporary* ban of the sale, etc, of prairie dogs, but does not agree with the potential permanence of the ban. Their concern is with the importation of animals. Since prairie dogs are indigenous to the US, there is no need to include them in the list of animals.

Please help those who care for these animals continue to do so. Help us lift this ban that will go into effect permanently in January 2004. These animals are very lovable and are a part of thousands of families across the country. They are friendly, playful and intelligent. Prairie dogs are an American treasure that should be protected in the wild and in homes.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Regards,



2003N-0400

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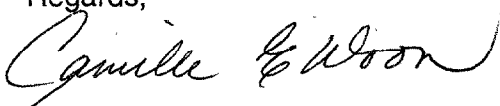
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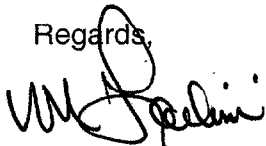
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