

# Open house opportunity to learn ferrets' story

The revival of the black-footed ferret could be considered one of the greatest species comebacks of all time, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

At one point, no known black-footed ferrets remained in the wild. Scientists thought them likely to be extinct until a few were discovered in 1981 in Wyoming. A species that ranged throughout the Great Plains — from Saskatchewan to Mexico and Kansas to Utah — was nearly gone. At one time, as few as 18 remained.

Museum collections indicate that western Kansas may have had more of the ferrets than most areas, but as farmers and ranchers eliminated millions of prairie dogs, the last confirmed sightings in the state were made nearly a half century ago.

Decades of prairie dog eradication primarily sponsored by the U.S. government wiped out most of the ferret's habitat and prey base. When the nocturnal carnivores were deemed extinct in 1979, the only native North American ferret



The black-footed ferret could make a comeback in Logan County under plans proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

seemed lost forever from the planet.

But fate gave the species one more chance. A small colony was discovered 25 years ago near Meeteetse, Wyo., when a ranch dog found a dead ferret and brought it to its owner. That wild population reached 128 but then took a nose dive. As a last resort to save the species, 18 ferrets were captured and one of the country's most intense breeding programs to save an endangered species began.

Educational representatives from the Smithsonian Institution and the

Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago plan to participate in an open house on reintroduction of the ferrets from noon to 6:30 p.m. Mountain Time today at the 4-H Building in Oakley.

Officials say the event will be of interest to anyone interested in nature, outdoor education or wildlife conservation, but special activities are planned for kids.

The manager of a black-footed ferret captive breeding facility in Colorado plans bring a live ferret. The ferret will continue on to the

Hutchinson Zoo, which will become its home. Staff from the Hutchinson Zoo and the Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City also will be at the open house.

Samantha Wisely, a research biologist and wildlife professor at Kansas State University, will be sharing her experiences with black-footed ferrets. She conducted research, including biomedical surveys, on all of the sites where ferrets have been stocked in western states.

Michael LeValley and Dan Mulhern with the Fish and Wildlife Service office in Manhattan will be available to answer questions regarding protocols that will be followed if the experimental reintroduction proceeds in Logan County.

A draft environmental assessment on the experimental reintroduction has been prepared by the service and will be available at the meeting and from the office in Manhattan. The public is invited to offer comments on the proposal during December.

## County, landowners square off on prairie dogs

DOGS, from Page 1a

to Barnhart's to start poisoning the prairie dogs. Haverfield said the Wyoming firm was hired by the county. He told Hausauer and a sheriff's deputy that the land was going to be used by cattle the next week.

"Barnhart's daughter found a lot of poison on the surface," Haverfield said Saturday. "They poisoned about 20 acres, but I put Barnhart in touch with the boss, Mitch Esponda, and I don't think they will be coming back on our land."

Haverfield said Jerry Wilson, an investigator from the Kansas Department of Agriculture, was out to check it out this week.

"We found out that is who you call when they come in on you," Haverfield said.

Haverfield and Barnhart have been working with the Fish and Wildlife Service for about a year to keep their prairie dogs and plan the reintroduction of the endangered ferrets, so elusive and rare the once were thought to be extinct.

The service is planning an open house in Oakley from noon to

6:30 p.m. today to talk about the plan, Haverfield said.

"We have lots of wildlife on our ranch," Haverfield said. "Yesterday I saw a flight of about six hawks flying together north of the house, and saw two eagles sitting on a windmill several miles northeast of the house."

"We run a lot of cattle, and want to bring in the ferrets to help control the dogs. Barnhart and I have about 7,500 acres of land with prairie dogs."

"The neighbors and the commissioners are worried that bringing the ferrets will keep them from farming. The federal wildlife people are hoping that the open house will give people a chance to learn more about what we are trying to do."

Haverfield said the open house will be a great educational opportunity. A live ferret is coming from Wyoming on the way to the Hutchinson Zoo.

"We have a great many people interested in bringing the ferrets back," he said. "There is a lot of emotion behind the opposition, and it is hard to get the right information out."

## Square dance clubs to celebrate 50 years

DANCERS, from Page 1a

said, and the Boots and Slippers Club shortly after. There were about 10 squares (80 dancers) in the Promenaders when the group formed, she said; now there are about 30 members.

Marie and George Edwards were among the couples who formed the

Boots and Slippers Club, and they belonged to other clubs as they started forming.

"We like square dancing," she said. "I have square danced all my life. I started with the old-time square dancers."

She grew up south west of Goodland and then lived northwest of town after marrying George, a farmer.

They later moved into town. She said they met while roller skating.

Edwards said she hadn't done much calling before joining the Promenaders but has fond memories of trying to learn. The Boots and Slippers Club bought square dance records, she said, and then one couple learned the dance from the record and taught it to others.

"Then we went to Benkelman and saw what we were doing wrong," she said. "They wanted everyone to call a dance there, so those who only knew one dance would go to the board to put it down, and if someone else already had that one, they'd try to talk them into calling something else. Otherwise, they danced the same one twice."

## matters of record

Goodland Police

The following crimes have been reported to the Goodland Police Department:

Nov. 8 — 10:43 a.m., 225 N. Court, arrested Michael Bertrand on a warrant. Case referred to city attorney.

6:38 p.m., 217 W. 5, Becklie Linnell reported criminal damage to property.

Nov. 11 — 2:43 a.m., 220 W. 2,

report of aggravated battery, criminal restrain and aid and abet in a crime against Brenda Gilliland. Case referred to county attorney.



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