



DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES



**Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Summary
For Colorado Legislators as per HB00-1314
Prepared by the Colorado Division of Wildlife; 1/9/2004**

Goal

To release sufficient numbers of Black-footed ferrets into the Wolf Creek Management Area to establish a pre-breeding population of at least 20 adult ferrets by the fifth breeding season following the 2001 release.

Reintroduction

- 43 Black-footed Ferrets (BFF) were released in fall of 2001 in 2 separate areas - Coyote Basin (8 BFF's) and Wolf Creek (35 BFF's)
- 28 BFF's released in the fall of 2002 – all in Wolf Creek
- 63 BFF's released in fall of 2003 – all in Wolf Creek

Monitoring

- 10 day intensive spotlighting effort (598 hours) conducted in August, 2003 to determine persistence of released ferrets and document if reproduction occurred.
- Spotlighting continued with small field crew throughout the fall/early winter with the exception of big game seasons.
- Snowtracking occurred in late November and December and is scheduled to continue throughout the winter.
 - Monitoring Results: Wolf Creek: A minimum number of 8 ferrets were identified during the fall/winter spotlighting effort, 4 of which have been positively identified. Of the 8 ferrets, 1 was a male, 3 were females, and 4 were unknown.

Habitat Evaluation/Monitoring

- Prairie dog transects completed Spring of 2003 to determine habitat suitability for 2004 release
 - Prairie dog populations were up by 13% from the 2002 survey. The amount of good habitat (higher densities of prairie dogs) in the western portion of Wolf Creek increased by 29% in 2003.
- Carnivore sampling completed in March and August, 2003 for detection of plague, tularemia, and distemper. Twenty-two coyotes were tested; 11 in both sampling periods. Results from sampling showed negligible levels of plague and canine distemper. Three animals tested positive for tularemia in August and one in March.

Upcoming Efforts

- Habitat evaluation will be conducted this spring (prairie dog transects)
- Post-release monitoring will continue utilizing spotlighting and winter snowtracking
- Disease monitoring will continue
- Allocation request will be made to USFWS this spring for additional ferrets – fall 2004 release

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