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By LARRY PHILLIPS

• Leader & Times

Though many people, including children, adore prairie dogs because of their cute, furry looks, cities and counties classify them as a nuisance and deal with them accordingly.

Liberal and Seward County are no different.

After numerous phone calls to the L&T asking what happened to the prairie dogs that lived just south of the railroad tracks on Pershing Avenue, L&T contacted the city.

The city has admitted the prairie dogs were poisoned in an attempt to control them from spreading throughout the area.

“Normally, we try to hit them about every two years,” said former public works director, and now consultant to the city, Joe Sealey. “The last time, I think we missed it, and they kind of got away from us.

“We’ve never been able to eradicate them – we’re just trying to control them,” he continued. “It’s kind of like bindweed, you can spray it today, and next week it’s back.”

The city has been battling prairie dogs for decades, according to Sealey.

“I’ve been here 17 years, and I think they were doing it before I got here,” he said.

There are several reasons for controlling them, the main one is because it’s on the county’s books.

“Remember, there’s also a county resolution that requires you to control prairie dogs,” Sealey said. “It’s just not a desire to. We’re required by county resolution to take care of them.”

Other reasons are complaints from area citizens, possible diseases and their propensity for expanding their “prairie dog town.”

“We get numerous complaints every year about them,” Sealey said. “And once they colonize an area, then they go out and start colonizing other areas – surrounding property owners’ land around the perimeter.

“And I don’t know how many diseases are attributed to them, but the biggest one they claim is bubonic plague,” he continued. “I don’t know that we’ve had an outbreak of that at Southwest Medical Center, but we sure don’t want one.”

Controlling them has been and will always be an ongoing battle, according to Sealey.

"If they get populated again, we'll do it again, and they'll be back, they always are," he said. "We've never been able to exterminate them, and we never will. So it will be a re-occurring thing trying to control those things.

"And that's what we're trying to do – just control them," he added.

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