

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

April 12, 2005      LB 673

for taxing purposes because of the devastation done by overpopulation of black-tailed prairie dogs. Thus, the overpopulation of black-tailed prairie dogs has lowered the taxing base of some counties and school districts that are in the 49th Legislative District. When an area becomes overpopulated with black-tailed prairie dogs, the vitality of the grassland ecosystem is jeopardized. During years of drought, the habitat can no longer support the population of a colony, and the species resort to any means to survive. Not only do they eat all the vegetation. They also eat plants' root system. In the worst of the circumstances, they will cannibalize their young, which they have done in western Nebraska. The devastation of all plant life in an area comprises...compromises water quality when precipitation does fall. Without vegetation, water will cause silt and debris to enter streams, degrading water quality. The black-tailed prairie dog creates colonies that alter topography and vegetation, and may extend over hundreds of acres. Black-tailed prairie dogs burrowing, foraging, and clipping of vegetation affects soils, water transport, and plants. Grassland ecosystems in areas traditionally used for wildlife habitat, recreation, and grazing may be destroyed if black-tailed prairie dog colonies are not managed. A management plan for black-tailed prairie dogs would address these problems and control them before they create the disastrous situation we now have in areas of northwest Nebraska. LB 673 is a tool to manage a wildlife situation that is out of control. It is a management plan to be used when a species begins to encroach into areas where it is not wanted, or areas it can cause harm to the environment, such as a watershed or forage producing areas. This bill is written to address a problem of encroachment onto adjacent property. LB 673 has been amended in advance by the Agriculture Committee. As amended, the bill will allow counties to choose to adopt the black-tailed prairie dog management plan. Section 3 of LB 673 addresses a procedure that counties use to adopt the act. A county may adopt by resolution and carry out a coordinated program for the management of black-tailed prairie dogs. It is not mandatory that any county in Nebraska adopt the plan. If a county adopts a management plan, it will be eligible to apply to the state Department of Agriculture for funds to assist with the cost of management. The committee amendment