

Summer Field Technician: Black-tailed prairie dog colony connectivity and risk of predation

Project: This project is focused on understanding factors that facilitate or discourage black-tailed prairie dog (BTPD) movement between colonies. We also aim to gain a better understanding of the effects that constructed raptor perches have on BTPD behavior both with vigilance as well as burrow activity.

Job description: We are looking for a technician that is passionate about prairie ecology to work with a graduate student collecting data on BTPDs on a working bison ranch in South Dakota. This job will consist of capturing, handling & collecting genetic samples from BTPDs, constructing raptor poles, deploying and maintaining camera traps and acoustic monitors, surveying vegetation and observing & recording BTPD behaviors. Live trapping activities will typically occur in the early morning and evening. Other research activities will occur throughout the day.

Location: This position is based out of Bad River Ranch SW of Fort Pierre, South Dakota. Work will take place in a variety of locations throughout the ranch but will be focused around BTPD colonies. Candidates should be prepared to work in all weather conditions in open prairie habitat, including in temperatures reaching above 90 degrees, to drive a vehicle or ATV to study sites, and to walk several miles on uneven terrain daily. This study is being conducted in collaboration with Turner Institute of Ecoagriculture.

Qualifications/ Expectations: Live-trapping experience is not required but is preferred. In addition, the selected candidate should demonstrate:

- Willingness to work irregular hours in a variety of weather conditions
- Experience or willingness to learn to safely ride ATVs
- Strong listening and communication skills
- Familiarity with using a GPS
- Experience collecting and recording accurate data in field settings
- Ability and willingness to follow all health and safety protocols to minimize plague risk
- Experience or willingness to learn to construct raptor poles using a variety of tools
- Ability to work alongside daily ranch operations
- Valid driver's license

All are encouraged to apply, but preference will be given to current MSU undergraduate students (including students graduating this spring).

Terms of appointment: This is a 3-month position, with approximate start and end dates being May 27 and August 21, 2026. Pay will be \$13.50/hr, and hours during the week will be variable. Housing on the ranch is provided. Personal field gear (e.g., day pack, hiking boots, field clothing appropriate for working in a variety of weather conditions) is the responsibility of the technician. The technician is also expected to have a personal vehicle for transportation to and from the study site, as well as traveling off the ranch.

To apply: Please send a resume or CV, a cover letter describing past experience and why you are interested in this position, and the contact information for three references to: ashlyn.hemmah@montana.edu, the application deadline is **February 18th**. Applications will be reviewed as they are received.