Thousands of pets and wild animals have already been killed by M-44s.

People have been poisoned.

An adult has died, 15 years after an M-44 destroyed his health.

And a child narrowly missed death, due to wind direction.

"This is a vital public safety issue. M-44s must be banned before a child is killed"

- Brooks Fahy
Executive Director

MARCH 2019 - A question we've long had is whether it will take the death of a child to succeed in banning the M-44s "cyanide bombs" used by our government in a futile attempt at predator control. We are still hopeful it won't, as media coverage and public outrage in demand of a ban has grown exponentially in recent years. But as a high-profile 2017 M-44 poisoning in Pocatello, Idaho amply demonstrated, it is only a matter of time before one of these deadly devices does kill a child.

Thousands of pets and wild animals have already been killed by M-44s. People have been poisoned and suffered long-term health effects. One adult (pictured below) has died in Utah, following cyanide exposure from an M-44, and Canyon Mansfield, the teenager in Idaho who was poisoned in 2017 and lost his dog, appeared to have only escaped death because of wind direction.

We are continuing to work toward a nationwide ban, while also pushing ahead on a state level to spur local jurisdictions to lead the way. Currently a bill in Oregon (SB 580) would prohibit M-44 use statewide. And we are encouraged by the 2017 temporary statewide ban in Idaho and on public lands in Colorado.

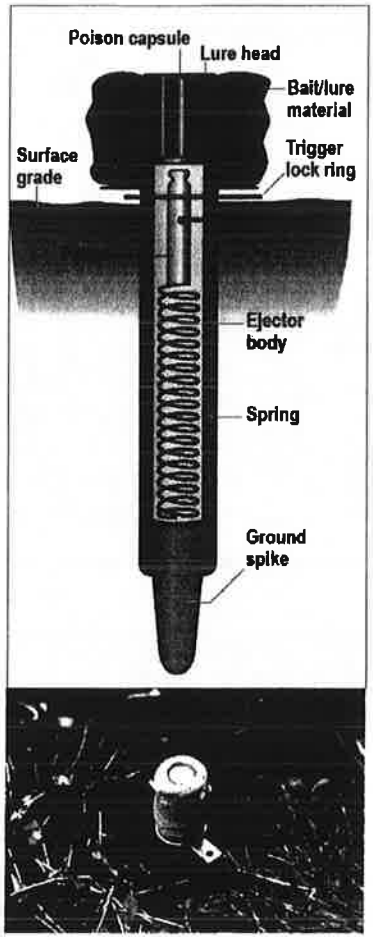
IN MEMORIAM

Dennis Slaugh, 1942-2018
Vernal, UT
Injured by an M-44 in 2003 and permanently disabled

M-44 "CYANIDE BOMBS" ARE KILLERS THAT NEED TO GO

What are M-44s?

- M-44s are spring-activated devices that eject a deadly dose of sodium cyanide, which the EPA has rated at Category 1, the highest degree of acute toxicity. Sodium cyanide suffocates the body's cells. It causes dizziness, weakness, labored breathing, and nausea, followed by a weak/irregular heartbeat, unconsciousness, convulsions, and death. Victims exhibit intense anxiety. They can die within minutes or suffer for hours.
- A federal program within the USDA called Wildlife Services has been using M-44s for decades to kill native predators on behalf of the agricultural industry.
- The heads of M-44s are applied with a smelly bait that lures coyotes, but also attracts non-target wildlife and dogs. M-44s are triggered when lightly pulled on. There have been reports of triggering due to a mere light touch. Their poison granules can spray up to five feet.
- Wildlife agents are required to carry an antidote, amyl nitrate. But people who stumble across M-44s, which are often unmarked, have no such protection. And young children, dogs and wild animals can't read warning signs.



Why M-44 use must end

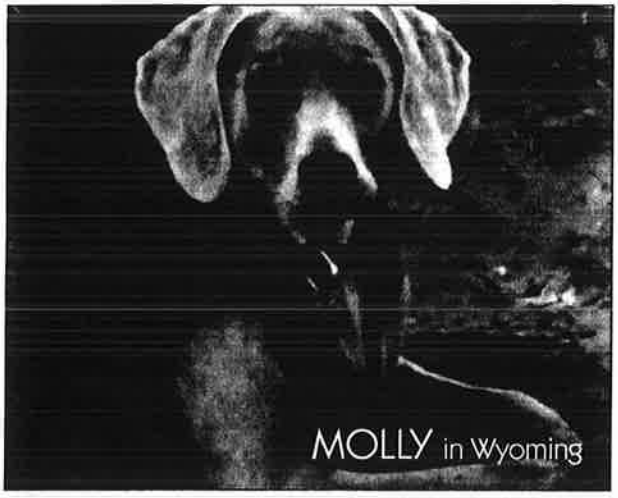
THE UNINTENDED TARGETS: Wildlife Services' own records show numerous mistakes made and risks taken with cyanide poison devices. Once placed in the field, they are essentially uncontrolled. Countless animals are never found after an M-44 firing. M-44s account for 10-15,000 animal deaths a year per USDA Program Data, which includes an untold numbers of domestic dogs. Whistle-blowers say agents rarely record pet deaths, are often told to lie, and often discard the evidence (see www.predatordefense.org/exposed).

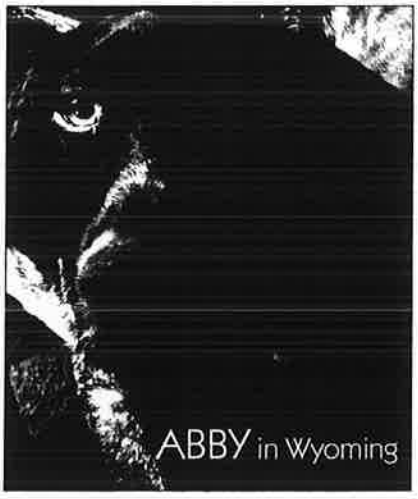
THE INEFFECTIVENESS: The impact M-44s have on preventing livestock losses is minuscule and not worth the profound risks and harm they cause to pets, humans, wildlife and ecosystems. M-44s comprise a tiny fraction of all lethal control methods used by Wildlife Services. Meanwhile, predation is one of the smallest causes of livestock loss (behind disease, birthing problems, weather, digestive issues...even poisoning!).

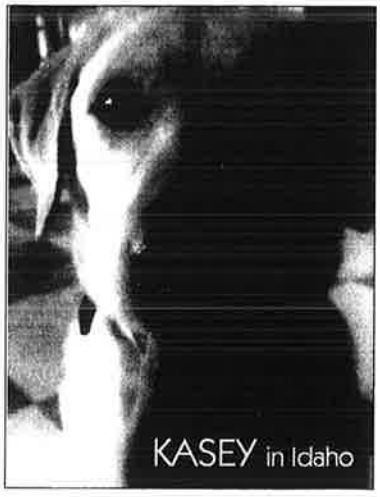
THE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVENESS: Science increasingly shows that lethal predator control is unnessary and counter-productive. For example, poisoning coyotes has not been shown to be effective in reducing predaton on livestock and game species; in fact, it may increase it, as coyotes respond to killing by increasing reproduction rates. So the reason USDA Wildlife Services gives for needing to use M-44s—predator control—is without merit!

Recent M-44 Victims

Countless dogs suffer an inhumane death each year from M-44 poisoning. Yours could be next. This is unacceptable!







You can help us ban M-44s by urging your legislators to pass a bill currently being considered in Oregon (SB 580) and a federal bill that will be introduced in the U.S. House in 2019 by Rep. Peter DeFazio. Both are vital, common-sense measures that will improve public safety and our great outdoors while saving tax dollars. Learn more and suppport our work at www.predatordefense.org/m44s.htm.

OREGON WILD

From the Office of Sen. Floyd Prozanski

March 14, 2019

Dear Senators,

Oregon Wild is a state-based conservation organization dedicated to protecting our wildlands, wildlife, and waters as an enduring legacy for all Oregonians.

We strongly support SB 580, a bill prohibiting the use of M-44 cyanide devices for controlling wildlife.

During the 2017 budget negotiations, and in response to loud public outcry about Wildlife Services and the use of M-44's in Oregon, a budget note was attached to money allocated to ODFW that said: The Department of Fish and Wildlife will seek assurances from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services that Wildlife Services will not use any state funding to purchase or deploy cyanide traps to control predators before disbursement of any General Fund monies appropriated during the 2017-19 biennium for predator control activities. While this budget note was an attempt to mollify the public's concerns, unfortunately it did nothing in way of actually curtailing the number of cyanide devices that are deployed and used in Oregon. In fact, it only created a more burdensome bureaucratic hassle for ODFW, without achieving an actual reduction in usage.

We need to address the public's concerns once and for all by passing a state prohibition on these cyanide devices, instead of making piecemeal attempts. These cyanide devices are indiscriminate and there are countless examples of M-44 cyanide devices harming people and killing non-target wildlife, but here are a few to highlight:

- In February of 2017, Wildlife Services killed OR 48 – a wolf from the Shamrock Pack in Wallowa County. This device was targeting a coyote, but because these devices are indiscriminate, it killed a wolf.
- In March of 2017, a young boy from Idaho was poisoned by an M-44 and his Labrador was killed when they inadvertently stepped on one during a walk, just 300 yards from their home.
- In February of 2011, the Walker family dog was killed by an M-44 in Texas, only 900 feet from their house.

Adding insult to injury, because these cyanide devices are spring loaded and activated by a bite and pull action (primarily used to target coyotes, feral dogs, and foxes), you cannot (rather should not) use guard dogs in areas where M-44s are deployed. Meaning, the very presence of these on the landscape discourages livestock operators and others from using a non-lethal conflict prevention tool.

I urge you to support SB 580 and to build on the progress that was attempted with the 2017-2019 budget note. Oregonians are looking to you to ensure we can effectively manage wildlife while keeping our families, pets, and non-target wildlife safe.

Thank you,

Danielle Moser

Wildlife Program Coordinator, Oregon Wild

More recently, M44 devices have begun to be used in Australia to control foxes and wild dogs. There they are loaded with sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080 poison) instead of sodium cyanide, and are called 'Canid Pest Ejectors'. The NSW Parks and Wildlife Service carried out trials in 2005-2011, and in 2016 they were approved for general use. The mechanical devices and lure heads are sold freely, but because the toxin capsules contain a regulated poison they require the purchaser to have a state permit.[6][7]

Criticism

Use of the M44 device has been criticized by animal welfare and environmental groups, as the devices have many unintended victims, including pets and endangered species; strongly indicative of a lack of selectivity, instead of the supposed high level.[8] In 2003, Mr. Dennis Slaugh of Vernal, Utah, was on public lands and mistook an M-44 for a survey marker. When he pulled on it, the device shot sodium cyanide powder on his face and chest causing him to become violently ill.[9] In February 2006, an M44 device killed a man's dog in Utah, as the dog and owner were walking through public land. The man was also affected by the cyanide in the device, and is seeking compensation from the US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Service, along with the Utah Department of Food and Agriculture.[10] In 2012 a family dog was killed in Texas.[11] In 2017 a 14-year-old boy in Idaho was injured, and his dog killed, by an M44 near his home.[12] Between 2013–2016, M44 devices killed 22 pets and livestock animals.[13] On April 11, 2017, a month after the 14-year-old boy in Idaho was injured, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it would be ending the use of the device in Idaho indefinitely.[14]

The M-44 consists of a capsule holder, a cyanide capsule, a spring-activated ejector, and a stake. Bilingual signs warn about the device.

When the trap is set, only the capsule holder and capsule protrude above ground level.

From the Office of Sen. Floyd Prozanski

M44 (cyanide device)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M44_(cyanide_device); references on Wikipedia's site.

The **M44 cyanide device** (also called a 'cyanide gun' or a 'cyanide trap') is used for the elimination of coyotes, feral dogs, and foxes. It is made from four parts: a capsule holder wrapped with cloth or other soft material, a small plastic capsule containing 0.88 grams of sodium cyanide, a spring-powered ejector, and a 5-7 inch stake. To install the trap, the stake is first driven down into the ground, and then the capsule is put in the holder, screwed onto the cocked ejector, and secured to the stake. The wrapped capsule holder is smeared with scented bait to attract coyotes and make them bite and pull on it. (The use of a bite-and-pull action makes the trap less likely to be set off by non-canine wildlife.[1]) When the trap is triggered, the spring propels a dose of sodium cyanide into the animals's mouth, and the sodium cyanide combines with water in the mouth to produce poisonous cyanide gas.[2] In addition to the cyanide, the capsule contains Day-Glo fluorescent particle marker (orange in capsules used by the Wildlife Services, and yellow in capsules prepared for other users) .[3]

History

The M44 was invented in the 1960s to replace a similar device known as a 'Coyote Getter', which had been in use since the 1930s. The Coyote Getter used a .38 Special pistol cartridge case to contain the sodium cyanide mixture, and ejected the cyanide with a primer. That design made the Coyote Getter quite hazardous, because the wad and cyanide were ejected with great force. For example, in 1959 a 15-year-old boy lost one eye when he accidentally set off a Coyote Getter by stepping on it, in 1966 a man was hit in the left hand and died from cyanide poisoning, and between 1965 and 1971 at least 17 humans were injured by Coyote Getters. Therefore, in the early 1960s the Fish and Wildlife Service started to develop a safer, spring-based replacement device. Much of the work was done by James Poteet, a Predator Control Specialist in Midland, Texas who received a patent for the device in 1967. The new device was gradually phased into Federal management programs beginning in 1967, and by November 1970 it had substantially replaced the Coyote Getter.[3][4]

Since its introduction, the M44 design was updated several times to solve problems such as caking in the cyanide capsules or malfunctioning ejectors. One effort in 1977-79 resulted in a completely new, slightly larger cyanide ejector called the M50. However, a field evaluation in 1982 showed that the older Poteet-designed M44 actually performed better, and the M50 was phased out. In 1984, the M44 ejector body and capsule holder were redesigned as it became necessary to replace the dies that had been used since 1967 to cast those metal parts. That model is still produced today, with some minor adjustments.[3]

Use against Canidae

The M44 is in frequent use by the USDA Wildlife Services in their programs to eliminate coyotes. For example, in 2016, out of the 76,963 coyotes that Wildlife Services killed, the M44 was used to kill 12,511 of them (16%).[5]