Non-Target Victims of USDA Wildlife Services Activities, 1990-2011

The list below documents incidents of people and domestic animals injured or killed by USDA Wildlife Service’s use of cruel and indiscriminate traps and poisons from 1990-2011. This list was compiled from agency documents, news reports, and various other sources by The Humane Society of the United States, www.humanesociety.org, and Predator Defense, www.predatordefense.org

August 2011 (Gresham, Oregon): The McCurtain family’s 7-year-old Border collie named Maggie was killed by a Conibear trap that had been set for nutria by Wildlife Services along a lake front in a residential neighborhood. The trap was placed on neighborhood common property, at the base of a trail leading to the pond’s edge, and 47 feet from the McCurtain’s backyard fence – an area where the family’s children regularly played. The trap clamped around Maggie’s head and neck and by the time she could be freed, she was dead.¹

February 2011 (Texas): The Walker family’s dog Bella was poisoned by an M-44 sodium cyanide device placed by Wildlife Services just 918 feet from their house and without their knowledge. Despite being notified of Bella’s death, Wildlife Services reset the device twice within the following two weeks. In addition to the M-44 that killed Bella, an M-44 was placed on a roadway that the Walkers – including their 11- and 18-year old sons - used daily and at least four other M-44s were just 6 to 10 feet away and within plain sight of roadways. In June 2012, the employee who set the M-44s was issued a “notice of violation” and fined $2,400 by the Texas Department of Agriculture for violating three M-44 use restrictions, including placing cyanide "in areas ... where exposure to the public and family pets is probable."²,³

August 2010 (Boise National Forest, Idaho): Robert Norie’s 2-year-old Husky mix named Bella was caught in a snare set by Wildlife Services within just 1000 feet of the camp where Norie was working as a contracted forester for the U.S. Forest Service. Norie found Bella entangled in a wire snare with the cable wrapped so tightly around her neck that it was nearly choking her, as well as around her torso and right rear leg. Bella had chewed off her foot in a desperate attempt to escape the snare. Norie and Bella had to hike 4½ miles out of the forest to seek veterinary help. Bella’s leg was amputated and she was hospitalized for three weeks. Norie underwent four days of hospital care for blood poisoning which resulted from a bite he received during his efforts to cut the cable off of Bella.⁴

April 2010 (Waverly, West Virginia): James and Carol Gardner’s 11-year-old Siberian Husky named Charm was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on their neighbor’s land. The Wildlife Services agent buried Charm without notifying the Gardners of her death despite the fact that she was wearing county dog tags and a rabies tag.⁵

February 2010 (Wauneta, Nebraska): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on the dog owner’s rangeland/pasture.⁶

December 2009 (Bandon, Oregon): A cat named Barney was killed in a Conibear trap set by Wildlife Services after a neighbor complained about "nuisance wildlife" (a beaver). Barney’s owner said that he was alive and crying out when she found him, but his spine and internal organs were crushed. She carried Barney to the vet with the trap still on him; he was then euthanized.⁷

September 2008 (Hillsboro, West Virginia): A Wildlife Services employee accidentally discharged an M-44 as he was working. Cyanide glanced off his glove and into his face.⁸,⁹

July 2008 (unknown location): A Wildlife Services employee accidentally discharged an M-44 as he was working and had cyanide exposure to his face and shoulder.¹⁰
June 2008 (Pound, Virginia): A Pit bull was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a livestock pasture/hayfield.11

May 2008 (Utah): Brooke and Cliff Everest of Bozeman, Montana, were on a rafting trip on the White River in Utah when their Brittany spaniel named Bea was poisoned by Compound 1080 which she apparently came into contact with when she inspected a sheep carcass.12

April 2008 (Burleigh County, North Dakota): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on rangeland/pasture.13

February 2008 (Callands, Virginia): A Beagle was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on pastureland.14

February 2008 (Lincoln County, New Mexico): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on pastureland.15

January 2008 (Richland County, North Dakota): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on rangeland/pasture.16

June 2007 (Broadview, New Mexico): A Great Pyrenees was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a pasture.17

May 2007 (Pearland, Texas): A Brazoria County employee who was spraying for mosquitoes stepped on or kicked an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a pasture. The cyanide was ejected into the man’s eyes and he subsequently experienced burning and irritated eyes as well as disorientation.18,19

April 2007 (Blue Grass, Virginia): Betty Mitchell’s 14-month-old Border collie was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on an adjoining sheep and cattle pasture.20,21

March 2007 (Blue Grass, Virginia): A Border collie was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on an adjoining sheep and cattle pasture.22

January 2007 (Rolette County, North Dakota): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on range/pasture land.23

January 2007 (Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma): A Wildlife Services employee was injured by the accidental discharge of an M-44 as he was working. The employee experienced a burning sensation in his right eye and a “weird” feeling.24,25

April 2006 (Millard County, Utah): Sharyn and Tony Aguiar’s 2-year-old German shepherd Max was killed when he triggered an M-44 at a rock quarry on public land. The agency denied any wrong doing and in a memo the Wildlife Services state director for Utah stated, “I have concerns about the government settling cases with dog owners because it is all too easy for someone to intentionally take a dog into an area posted with sign with the intention of getting the dog killed. I recommend against settling this claim.”26,27

February 2006 (Roosevelt, Utah): Samuel Pollock, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was hunting on federal land with his 2-year-old Labrador retriever Jenna when she triggered an M-44 that was approximately one foot from the road. Jenna died in approximately 90 seconds. The Environmental Protection Agency issued a “notice of warning” to Wildlife Services because the cyanide capsule had been placed within 50 feet of a public road or pathway.28

January 2006 (Monterey, Virginia): A Golden retriever was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a livestock pasture.29,30
**December 2005** (Wayne County, Utah): Zoe, a certified therapy dog who worked with at-risk youth in a wilderness program, was hiking on a public road with a girls' group when she was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services. The trap was 10 feet from the road at the most.  

**April 2005** (Quemado, New Mexico): A Wildlife Services employee experienced accidental discharge of an M-44 unit. He tasted and smelled a small amount of sodium cyanide.  

**April 2005** (Milnesand, New Mexico): A Border collie was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on the owner's ranch property.  

**March 2005** (Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina): A flat-coated retriever mix was taken to the Dare County Animal Shelter by a Wildlife Services trapper. The dog had a swollen paw, which burst open from infection two days after he was found, as well as a laceration under his neck. The injuries appeared to have been caused by a leg-hold trap and a snare. Although the trapper had bound the dog's legs and muzzle in duct tape because he believed the animal was feral, shelter staff said he had been wearing a collar, was housebroken, and was quite social.  

**March 2005** (Chaves County, New Mexico): An Australian Shepherd cross was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on rangeland.  

**March 2005** (Hidalgo County, New Mexico): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on adjoining ranch land.  

**August 2004** (New Mexico): A dog died after jumping into a Wildlife Services agent's pickup truck and coming into contact with sheep's wool that had been contaminated by Compound 1080 from a Livestock Protection Collar.  

**March 2004** (Kamiah, Idaho): A dog was found dead within 200 yards of an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a nearby sheep pasture.  

**March 2004** (Curry County, New Mexico): A German shepherd was killed by an M-44 placed by Wildlife Services at a cow carcass on neighboring property. The report noted that the dog was wearing a red collar.  

**February 2004** (Glasgow, Virginia): An Irish setter was likely killed by an M-44 placed by Wildlife Services on nearby pastureland.  

**January 2004** (Canjilon, New Mexico): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on the ranch of the dog owner's relative.  

**May 2003** (Uintah County, Utah): Dennis Slaugh was poisoned when he triggered an M-44 while looking for arrowheads and rare stones on public land in Utah. Mr. Slaugh survived, but cyanide exposure rendered him weak-limbed, frequently short of breath, plagued with headaches, and with chronic dizzy spells that forced him to retire from his job laying asphalt on county roads.  

**November 2002** (unknown location): A woman was injured after trying to remove an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on her neighbor's property. She experienced a slight burning sensation to her eyes and increased respiratory rate.  

**June 2002** (Seneca Rocks, West Virginia): A black Angus cow was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a pasture.
April 2002 (Gate City, Virginia): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on a neighboring farm.48

March 2002 (unknown location): A Wildlife Services employee was injured by the accidental discharge of an M-44 when he reached into a bucket containing completely set units. The employee experienced a burning sensation in his eyes and a bad taste in his mouth.49

February 2002 (unknown location): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services.50

February 2002 (Pearisburg, Virginia): A Labrador retriever was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on a neighbor’s cattle pasture.51

February 2002 (Quay County, New Mexico): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on rangeland/pasture.52

February 2002 (Philomath, Oregon): Danielle Clair’s dog Oberon suffered for more than eight hours before dying from exposure to sodium cyanide from an M-44 he triggered that was set by WS on property next door to her home and without her knowledge. In response to the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture’s (ODA) investigation into the incident, WS requested that ODA “consider the info provided during the investigation be confidential and not disclosed as public record [emphasis added].” WS also refused to release a copy of the incident report to Clair based on an apparently exceedingly broad interpretation of a Texas injunction issued against WS’ release of the names of WS cooperators.53,54,55

February 2002 (Kings Valley, Oregon): A dog triggered an M-44 placed on a neighboring ranch by Wildlife Services.56

February 2002 (location unknown): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services.57

February 2002 (location unknown): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on the farm of the dog owner’s relative.58

January 2002 (Brady, Nebraska): A rancher was injured by the accidental discharge of an M-44 that had been set by Wildlife Services on his property. The man was covering an M-44 with a cinder block “to protect bird dogs that were expected in the area [emphasis added].” Despite the fact that he was wearing eyeglasses, the man experienced cloudy vision following the incident.59

June 2001 (Benton County, Oregon)
Steve Whybra’s cat had to have her leg amputated after she was caught in a leghold trap set by Wildlife Services on a neighbor’s property. Three months earlier, the Wildlife Services agent had put a note on Whybra’s gate claiming that Whybra’s dog had been caught in one of his traps (Whybra didn’t have a dog), accusing Whybra of taking the trap, and threatening to call the police as well as file federal charges against him. APHIS attempted to withhold documents requested by Whybra through FOIA.60,61,62

May 2001 (Mt. Solon, Virginia): A Wildlife Services employee was injured when an M-44 discharged into his face as he was working. Despite the fact that he was wearing over-sized safety glasses at the time of the incident, he had temporary blindness and a corneal abrasion on his left eye, which swelled shut, blisters on his tongue and lips, and he was dizzy and light-headed.63,64,65

May 2001 (Gardner, Colorado): Maggie and Johnny Watson’s dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on a neighboring ranch. The initial internal review of an investigation conducted by the Colorado Department of Agriculture indicated that the devices were placed
outside the provisions authorized by state law.  

**April 2001** (Sargent, Nebraska): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on rangeland/pasture.

**September 2000** (Wasatch County, Utah): A county surveyor discharged an M-44 after pulling on it with his hand because he apparently believed it was a survey marker.

**May 2000** (Slatyfork, West Virginia): A Border collie was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services in a sheep pasture.

**March 2000** (Crawford, Colorado): Paul Wright of Crawford, Colorado was working on an irrigation ditch at his farm with his three-year old daughter, Meaghan, when his dog, Bob, triggered an M-44 that had been set by Wildlife Service agents on the property without Mr. Wright’s knowledge or permission. Mr. Wright and his daughter watched helplessly as Bob suffered and died from exposure to the toxicant. A state investigation found that Wildlife Services had not only trespassed, but broken a suite of federal rules regulating M-44s.

**February 2000** (San Miguel County, New Mexico): A domestic dog activated an M-44 set on rangeland/pasture by Wildlife Services.

**January 2000** (Estacada, Oregon): Dixie Tippett’s German shepherd Bud was killed after triggering an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on a tree farm 100 yards from Tippett’s home. The device was one of eight that had been planted in a Christmas tree farm frequented by local children.

**December 1999** (New Mexico): Bill Bunting’s two German shorthair dogs were killed by sodium cyanide during a hunting trip in New Mexico on state lands.

**December 1999** (Custer County, Nebraska): A citizen accidentally discharged an M-44 placed by Wildlife Services on neighboring property as he attempted to move it with a pair of pliers while he was repairing fence wire. He was driven to a medical center where he was observed for symptoms of cyanide poisoning.

**October 1999** (Sterling County, Texas): A Wildlife Services employee accidentally discharged an M-44 as he was setting it and was hit in the face and forearm with cyanide. The man’s eyes burned, the muscles in the back of his neck and upper shoulders were tight, and he had a dry mouth and started to cough. He was treated at a nearby medical clinic and then airlifted to a facility that was able to treat for cyanide exposure.

**October 1999** (Sanpete County, Utah): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services.

**September 1999** (Pound, Virginia): A hound dog out with hunters was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services. M-44s were not permitted for use in Virginia from September 1 to January 7, but the Wildlife Services employee had failed to remove them.

**September 1999** (Pistol River, Oregon): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services.

**August 1999** (location unknown): An individual helping a Wildlife Services employee look for and remove M-44s accidentally fired one of the devices. Cyanide dust covered the palm of his hand, some landed on his shirt, and a small amount spotted his glasses.

**April 1999** (Big Stone Gap, Virginia): Gary and Yvonne Tucker’s dog Rufus was killed when he triggered an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on a neighboring farm. Mr. Tucker found
Rufus’ and another dog’s body at the device. The Tuckers believed that their other dog, Cody, also came into contact with an M-44 as he returned home with red and swollen eyes as well as a swollen mouth and a peculiar odor. When Mr. Tucker touched his own face after examining Cody, he had a burning sensation around his left eye. Mr. Tucker discovered that local hospitals had not been notified of the use of cyanide in the area.82,83

**December 1998** (Lorane, Oregon): A dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services.84

**November 1998** (Sierra Blanca, Texas): While working on his private ranch, Bill Guerra Addington was injured when he grabbed what he thought was a rusted metal rod to pull it from the ground and an M-44 exploded in his hand.85

**February 1998** (San Juan County, Utah): Nancy Gardner’s dog was killed by an M-44 set by Wildlife Services on Bureau of Land Management property that adjoined her land. Ms. Gardner was not notified about Wildlife Services activities on the BLM land.86,87,88

**January 1997** (Sanpete County, Utah): Sodium cyanide dust drifted into a Wildlife Services employee’s eyes. The employee was treated in an emergency room for irritation to the eyes.89

**April 1995** (Idaho): A hunter accidentally discharged an M-44 that had been set by Wildlife Services.90

**1994** (Willamette County, Oregon): Amanda Wood Kingsley and her husband were walking their dog, Ruby, on their family farm when Ruby triggered an M-44 that had been set on the property by Wildlife Services without the Kingsley’s knowledge or permission. Ruby screamed, writhed and thrashed in pain for 15 minutes before she finally succumbed to the poison. Since Ms. Kingsley had no knowledge that an M-44 had been placed on the property, and hence, did not know why her dog was in respiratory distress, she gave Ruby mouth-to-mouth in an attempt to resuscitate her dog, and as a result, suffered secondary cyanide poisoning.

**August 1993** (Utah): Two bow hunters pulled M-44s set by Wildlife Services.91

**March 1992** (North Dakota): A Wildlife Services employee was exposed to cyanide when the M-44 he was dismantling ejected. The man subsequently had great difficulty breathing, felt very faint, and had a racing heart and went to a medical clinic for treatment.92,93

**April 1990** (New Mexico): A dog accompanying a ranch hand triggered an M-44 set by Wildlife Services. After attempting mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the dog, who died within a few minutes, the man quickly began feeling ill. He experienced loss of breath, a swollen tongue, a fast heart rate, numb lips, and curling fingers on one hand. He was transported to a hospital where he was treated and placed in intensive care.94

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2. Predator Defense, [http://www.predatordefense.org/m44s_bella.htm](http://www.predatordefense.org/m44s_bella.htm)
4. Personal account of Robert Norie.
9. OSHA’s Form 301, Injury and Illness Incident Report.
10 OSHA’s Form 301, Injury and Illness Incident Report.
25 Statement of Kenny Kellett, USDA-WS Northeast District Supervisor
36 Catherine Kozak, “PETA urges park to ban snares, steel-jaw traps after dog’s injury,” The Virginian-Pilot, 10 June 2005.
87 U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management Incident Record, Case No. UT-069-98-03.
91 Memo from James A. Winnat, Utah State Director, USDA-APHIS-WS to ADC employees, 09 September 1993.
92 USDA-APHIS-ADC Report on M-44 Accident
93 Memo from Dr. Peter L. Joseph, USDA-APHIS-Biotechnology, Biologies, and Environmental Protection to Ms. Anne E. Lindsay, Director, Registration Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 23 June 1992.
94 Memo from Larry J. Killgo, State Director, ADC, Albuquerque, NM to District Supervisor, ADC, Roswell, NM, 01 May 1990.