

## **Wildlife Services kills another dog and endangers children**

Buddy, George and Dixie Tippet's German shepherd family pet, didn't come home Thursday, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000. While looking for him, Mr. Tippet heard there might be poison on an adjacent property. On Friday the Tippet's found Buddy dead with bloody foam coming from his nose and mouth, 100 yards from their back door. Mr. Tippet discovered curious pink cones amongst candy wrappers and cigarette butts on and around the pathway and entrance to the area where Buddy's body lay. The pink devices are M-44s—devices that shoot extremely dangerous poison containing sodium cyanide capsules. Six M-44s were found along the path and entrance to the area. Five were still set; one was discharged and found near Buddy's body. No warning signs were evident at the entrance to the well-worn path through the tree farm in residential Estacada, Oregon, where neighborhood kids play and people walk their dogs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services' own directives state that M-44s cannot be used in "areas where exposure to the public and family and pets is probable." In addition, the agency's directives state that "main entrances or commonly used access points to areas in which M-44 devices are set shall be posted with warning signs to alert the public to the toxic nature of the cyanide and the danger to pets."

Mr. Tippet's veterinarian did not want to accept Buddy's body for fear of contamination. He, like most other veterinarians, was not familiar with sodium cyanide poison. The poison center was called, and personnel there could not help since they too were not familiar with the devices. Finally, the Oregon University veterinary diagnostic laboratory was contacted and was able to provide information about how to safely handle Buddy's body. A necropsy was performed and the results were positive for cyanide poisoning.

Predator Defense spent days documenting these and other violations of M-44 directives on videotape and photographs before the traps were pulled. Coverage of the incident aired on several local television channels and *The Oregonian* newspaper. As a result of the media coverage, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) initiated an investigation.

Although this incident was reported and complaints were filed no action was taken to reprimand or fine the USDA Wildlife Services for violating their own guidelines and endangering the safety of Oregon residents, their pets, and wildlife.

A few weeks later, Predator Defense set up a meeting with staff from Congressman Peter Defazio's office and the ODA's pesticide division's assistant administrator. The ODA pesticide inspectors never spoke to any of the witnesses

referred to them by Predator Defense some of whom were children and teenagers who played near the M-44 traps. The ODA instead spoke to the Tippetts and the owner of the Christmas tree farm where the traps were located. Predator Defense was not able to locate any type of livestock within miles of this area. This case is a classic example of a federal agency running amuck and how state agricultural agencies like ODA cover up EPA violations to protect USDA Wildlife Services. Dixie and George Tippettt were so intimidated by the behavior of the State pesticide inspectors that they never filed a tort claim for the loss of their dog for fear of retribution.

Weeks later Predator Defense was contacted by an investigator with the USDA Office of Inspector General regarding our involvement in this case. Predator Defense agreed to meet with the investigator under the conditions that the meeting would be tape-recorded and that a representative be present from Congressman DeFazio's office. The investigator agreed but hours later reversed that decision and we've not heard from them since.