

February 11, 2008

Dear Congressman DeFazio,

I recently learned about your efforts and those of Predator Defense to ban M-44s. I want to help in any way I can to eliminate these dangerous and cruel non-discriminating devices.

I equate these predator-killing devices to land mines designed to kill people. Any living animal or human happening upon one can get killed by it, even many years after it was set.

On January 19, 2008 I called Brooks Fahy at Predator Defense to tell him my story. That description follows.

My name is Bill Guerra Addington. I was born May 3, 1954 in Ft. Hancock, Texas in Hudspeth County. My family has farmed and ranched in Sierra Blanca, Texas for three generations. We also own a General Store. Our other business interests in Sierra Blanca have included rental homes and retail business space, a lumber company and a propane company.

My grandfather was a pioneer of Sierra Blanca, arriving from Merida, Yucatan, Mexico in 1915. He built all of our businesses from scratch with a lot of hard work and sacrifice, including our farm and ranch. Our ranch and farm is located between the Eagle Mountains and Rio Grande River. Presently we own a 2,000-acre farm and ranch, but until 1985 we also owned a 65,000-acre ranch in the same area, between the Eagle Mountain and Quitman Mountain Ranges.

In November of 1998, I was checking on some pregnant cows on our ranch. It was about 10 a.m. I had been cutting Yucca Dagger Blossom crowns with a machete for the cows that were about to

give birth, as the blossoms are very nutritious and help the calves and mother cows to have a healthy birth event.

I went to check a small metal cattle-watering tank that had been dry for several years. We were planning to fix the float and pipe on it so it could supply water. I noticed what appeared to be a rusted rod sticking out of the ground about 15 feet from the watering tank. It appeared to me that the "metal rod" had been there for a long time, many years.

I thought this "metal rod" needed to be removed, because it was sticking up out of the ground and could injure one of our cows. Standing up, I bent over to pull the rod out of the ground. After I grabbed the top and moved the "metal rod" back and forth to remove it from the ground, it exploded in my hand. A cloud of yellow dust blew away from the rod and me to the southeast. My cousin, who was nearby, yelled, "What's happening?" I didn't answer as I was shocked by the explosion and pain coming from my right hand. I looked at my hand and saw it was all cut up and burned, and there was yellow powder all over it. The yellow powder was even burnt into the burns and cuts on my hand. My hand was bleeding and was starting to swell from the explosion trauma. I called to my cousin for help. He was already on his way to me when I had called to him. I remembered hearing about the government putting "coyote getters" on some public lands that were leased for ranching. But our county and west Texas has no public land and I was puzzled why a "coyote getter" would be on our private land. After my cousin reached me we both agreed I had been injured by a "coyote getter". My cousin said I was lucky we had a fairly strong wind, or the cyanide would have gotten in my face, mouth and eyes.

I just wanted to wash my hand off, to get the yellow powder off of it. I wiped my hand with my bandanna. We rode our horses about a mile to where our water and supplies were, as we had left our canteens and water containers there with our other supplies and tools. I washed my hands with a lot of water for about five minutes. Some of the yellow cyanide dust on and inside of my cut and burned hand would not wash off. We drove to the ranch house and I used warm water and soap to try to wash out the yellow cyanide dust. I did not get any more off of my hand; it was burnt inside the burns and cuts.

The pain was really bad for about two hours. My hand healed slowly, but even on the healing cuts and burns I could see yellow. I had a yellow palm for five or six months.

A day after the injury I took apart the "coyote getter" and found how it worked. The firing of the 8-inch long device was triggered by a spring-loaded firing pin, which hit a .38 Special blank metal cartridge. I could see the empty chamber in the cylinder where the cyanide packet was. The top of the metal cylinder has a very old piece of gauze wrapped around it. My cousin said that was for the scent to attract the predator.

I am glad my dog had not come with us that day to look after the cattle as he usually did. I don't know if he would have hit the rod walking around the cattle-watering tank.

I still have the device that exploded in my hand.

If there is any way my experience with the "coyote getter" could help ban the M-44, please let me know.

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