



## PRESS RELEASE

*January 17, 2008*

### **Asserting a Cover-up, Predator Defense Compels EPA to Investigate Human Poisonings by USDA's Wildlife Services Program**

Predator Defense was recently contacted by a Special Agent of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to inform the organization that the agency is launching a formal investigation into the poisoning of a man by a device Wildlife Services uses across the country.

In September 2007, Predator Defense, a national wildlife advocacy group based in Eugene, OR, confronted the U.S. Government on its use of a deadly poison device called the M-44. The group demanded that the EPA immediately investigate human poisoning cases and place a moratorium on the use of sodium cyanide devices.

In 2003 while recreating on BLM land, near Vernal, Utah, Dennis Slaugh pulled on what he mistook for a survey maker—an M-44. The device shot sodium cyanide powder on his face and chest. Immediately Mr. Slaugh became violently ill and to this day he suffers from the long-term effects of this poison; it is likely that his life will be shortened as a result.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services Program is the only U.S. Agency authorized to use the M-44. Wildlife Services steadfastly denies responsibility for setting this M-44, even though the device that harmed Mr. Slaugh is clearly marked "U.S. GOVT". Brooks Fahy, Executive Director of Predator Defense states "We find this assertion hard to believe given that the evidence suggests Wildlife Services used M-44s in the area during this time".

Registered for use by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the agency has the authority to pull any registration that violates the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The act requires Wildlife Services to report incidents of human poisoning to the EPA within 15 days.

M-44s are commonly used by Wildlife Services to kill animals they perceive as a threat

to livestock. These devices cannot differentiate between a coyote, a wolf, a dog, or a person. When pulled on, even lightly, the device spews enough sodium cyanide to kill a person. Mr. Fahy equates M-44s with land mines and asserts, "It's only a matter of time before someone is killed". In fact, Wildlife Services has acknowledged over 20 cases where U.S. government trappers were accidentally poisoned by M-44s.

According to Sander Orent, M.D., who is board certified in both Occupational and Environmental Medicine and Internal Medicine and who currently serves as Medical Director of Arbor Occupational Medicine in Boulder, CO., "Cyanide is unquestionably one of the most lethal poisons known to man. Its toxicity is legion. The concept of placing explosive cartridges loaded with this substance on or near public land is at best extremely foolish and dangerous to humans, pets, livestock and all wildlife. At worst it is a gross violation of the public trust and the concept of public health. I would urge the immediate banning of these devices."

In 1994 Amanda Wood contacted Predator Defense seeking help when her dog Ruby died from an M-44 that was set on her property without her permission or even her knowledge. Ms. Wood suffered secondary poisoning as she tried to save her pet from an agonizing death. Although Ms. Wood reported her experience to Wildlife Services, agency records reveal no report was made to the EPA. In fact, a Freedom of Information Act request produced no documentation of her report whatsoever.

Mr. Fahy has documented numerous cases where M-44s have been set in close proximity to homes with pets and children. In one such case, in Estacada, OR, children played within several feet of an M-44 that was set within a hundred yards of homes. He asserts "It is inconceivable that the government continues to use these devices when we know of at least two dozen near-fatal accidents."

Two month's after Predator Defense's request EPA had yet to respond. Predator Defense's then enlisted the help of long-time ally, Congressman Peter DeFazio, who urged the EPA to confirm that the agency was acting on Predator Defense's request.

In mid-December the January 2008 issue of *Men's Journal* hit newsstands, highlighting the poisoning of Dennis Slauch in an article titled "America's Secret War on Wildlife." It is available online at

[http://www.predatordefense.org/content/article\\_Mens\\_Journal\\_waronwildlife\\_Jan2008.pdf](http://www.predatordefense.org/content/article_Mens_Journal_waronwildlife_Jan2008.pdf)

**Special Note:** On December 18, 2007, Congressman Peter DeFazio, (D-OR), introduced HR 4775 The Compound 1080 and M-44 Elimination Act. This bill would ban the U.S. government's use of M-44s.

### **For More Information**

For more information on M-44s and the stories mentioned in this press release, visit [www.predatordefense.org](http://www.predatordefense.org) and click on Ban M-44s.

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