

“My Best Friend, Kasey” - by Canyon Mansfield, March 20, 2017



A heart-wrenching, first-hand account of loss, written by Canyon Mansfield, a 14-year-old boy from Pocatello, Idaho. Canyon and his lab Kasey are pictured above in the spot where tragedy struck.

While walking on the hill behind his back yard, Canyon accidentally triggered an M-44 “cyanide bomb” that killed his dog. The device had been set by a federal wildlife agent to kill coyotes. It just missed killing Canyon as well.

WARNING: Graphic content. Reader discretion advised.

“It was March 16, 2017 and I, Canyon Mansfield, was home sick for the second day with a common cold. Around noon I yearned to go outside and hike the hill behind my home. This is not an unusual endeavor for me or anyone else as the hill is a common hiking and biking location. There should have been no risk associated with a 14-year-old boy taking a stroll near his home.

I took my dog, Kasey, with me to keep me company. We walked up the hill as Kasey and I played ball, completely unaware of the traps lurking around us. We reached the top of the hill. I admired the beautiful landscape around us that I have seen many times before. I sat down and began to pray in the spirit of the nature around me. I then got up to explore the hill out of curiosity.

After throwing Kasey’s toy, I spotted a metal tube sticking out between two rocks. The tube closely resembled a sprinkler head. While my dog ran around I bent down and touched the strange tube. A metal spring triggered and the device popped. Orange gas spewed around me and I found myself lying on the ground. My left arm and calf were covered with orange powder. My left eye burned. I hurried to the nearest patch of snow and irrigated my eye and washed my clothes with the snow. I heard a mumbling sound which I assumed was Kasey chewing and shaking his toy. I was surprised to see the toy sitting a few yards next to him. I felt my stomach clench into a knot because I knew instantly that something was wrong. I then called him next to me. No response came from him except mumbling. I slapped my side and called him again. Nothing.

Kasey was a well trained hunting dog, well versed in a multitude of commands and capable of understanding directions such as left and right. He continued mumbling on the ground. I quickly sprinted with worry and witnessed him start to seizure. I panicked and kept yelling his name in disbelief. I examined him thinking he might have gotten shot by the strange outburst of the metal tube, because I saw blood on the snow. The blood was coming from his mouth. His eyes were turning glassy and he was twitching with fear. I turned his head towards me and said, “Just look at me Kasey. Breathe with me....Breathe... Breathe.”

He not could see me. I could not comfort him as I saw his scared, confused, suffering face. I tried to pick him up and carry him down the hill but he was too big and difficult to hold. I saw his body turn limp. I yelled in panic and sprinted down the hill falling continu-

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ously in the snow but getting up and running again.

I reached my house and yelled for my mother. I told her what had happened and we both got into the car. She says there was no way to get up there in a car. So, I called my father while my mother quickly got dressed for the journey up the hill. He hung up the phone and quickly began driving home. My mother and I rushed up the hill which was very steep. I reached the top of the hill again and went to the spot where Kasey laid.

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“He’s gone”, I said crying to my mother. I saw her burst into tears and fall to her knees. She then runs towards me and looks for Kasey. She saw him and fell to his side and put her head to his chest. “It’s OK. It’s OK Kasey,” she repeated with tears, “Wake up, Kasey! Wake up!” I then heard my father yelling, “Where are you?”

I ran down the hill once again and led him to where Kasey was. I told my dad he’s gone but he refuses to believe that his buddy is gone. He got to the top and saw him on the ground. He yelled Kasey’s name in emotional pain and grabbed him. He put his head to his chest and listened to his heartbeat. We heard nothing but the strong wind against pine trees.

My father yells Kasey’s name again and again and then tries to do CPR on him. Nothing happens. My father then goes to perform mouth to mouth resuscitation but I stop him. I told him it could be poison that killed Kasey so we can’t risk ourselves being poisoned in order to attempt to save Kasey. My father ordered me to take my clothes off because the poison could enter through my skin from my clothes. I take my clothes off leaving a pair of tennis shoes and no socks on my feet and my underwear. I show the tube that killed Kasey to my parents and they are frightened and confused about the object.

We walked down the hill not talking and staring in disbelief at the ground. Our Kasey was gone. So unexpected and sudden. That’s what made it all the more painful. I just had my tennis shoes and underwear to walk through the deep, cold snow. My mother held my red backpack and my father carried the body of Kasey. Kasey’s head dangled with every step and I looked away with deep pain in my heart. When we had reached our home I was ordered by my father to shower immediately. For the poison could be on my skin and kill myself and others. My wet, orange stained clothes stayed outside to prevent any contamination and my father alerted the sheriff of what happened.

I sobbed in pain for what happened to my dog. I hated the fact that I couldn’t play fetch with my friend. The last thing Kasey saw before he died was me. I could not help him. No one could. I felt so useless when my friend was dying. It still haunts me today on how I couldn’t help him. The images that I saw will stay in my mind forever. I went downstairs slowly and waited in the kitchen staring forward. I saw police cars and a fire truck pull up into my driveway. They questioned me on what happened and I explained what I saw and experienced. They looked in disbelief because they were so confused.

When I was finished they returned to their cars and discussed what the thing that almost killed me might be. The hazmat squad pulled into the driveway and I stared through the window watching them. I saw my best friend’s body laying on the side of our driveway. He was so still laying there. “Wake up, Kasey,” I thought to myself, “Wake up and get your ball” I forced myself to look away because the pain was too great. I shed tears again because of my dog not waking up.

The police, hazmats, and firemen walked up the hill while I stayed laying on our couch. They told my father that they had found the metal tube and said they were nonplussed because they did not know what it could be. I heard from my father on his cellphone that a person not even at our house at the time said that the metal tube sounds like a coyote cyanide bomb. The men searching the top of the hill looked up coyote cyanide bombs on the internet and it was exactly what it was.

As soon as the men heard that the strange tube was a coyote cyanide bomb they told

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my father to take me to the hospital. I got in the car with my mother both astonished that it was cyanide and we rushed to the emergency room. We were not allowed to enter by the main doors as we were contaminated, and instead had to enter through the decontamination showers. I got my blood drawn and luckily by God's gift of wind blowing the cyanide gas out of my face I was alright. My family also were required to get their blood drawn and they were healthy as well. The entire group of men who went up the mountain to investigate were required to be tested as well. Through God's grace no one was hurt.

Today, March 20, 2017, I woke up, remembered the entire incident and regained all the sadness from the death of a family member. How different things could be in the present for my family if the man who placed the traps checked the area for any inhabitants nearby. If he could have just looked up the location on maps and saw that there was a house three hundred-fifty yards away. He could see a swing set, a slide, soccer goals, and the fields Kasey played in. He would have seen my family with their happy yellow lab. Even if he still put the cyanide bombs there knowing there was a house nearby, but would have warned my family and the others around it about it, things could have been different. Things would be much happier for my family. I would be playing catch outside with my dog. He would have been so happy playing with his toys. He would have been frolicking in our yard on a spring day. I feel great inaction right now because of the tragedy that has occurred. My mentality has suffered severely and I find it hard to be joyful again.

I met with man who had murdered my dog earlier today and I felt anger when I saw his face. But something changed inside of me when I saw him. It was perhaps knowing that he was human just like me helped me feel more at peace. But I still was angry for what he had done to my family.

He apologized repeatedly about the incident and I questioned him on the bombs. I asked him why he thought these bombs were ethical and a good idea to put in nature but I was never given a straight answer. He only just said we have different points of view on the subject. He also asked me to see if I wanted to see the signs that were to be warning people of the bombs. These were not the signs that were guarding the bomb that killed my dog. They were just other signs that guarded other bombs. I looked in dismay as I saw him pull out a little wood sign that was supposed to be on the road leading to the bomb, and just a 10- inch stake with orange tape wrapped around the tip supposed to be 25 feet away from the bomb.

No signs like these were near the cyanide bomb that took my dog away from me. To others though these signs would have a large chance of being useless because of their size and placement. How absurd how USDA Wildlife Services warns people of these cyanide bombs. A sign attached to a fence on the road up the hill would only work if the person was driving up the hill, which no one usually does because the hill is regularly used for hiking. And a 10-inch wooden stake in the ground 25 feet away from it. Half of the stake would be hammered underneath the ground, so that only leaves five inches of a sign warning people of a deadly bomb. A wet floor sign warns you more about a slightly moisturized floor than the signs placed by Wildlife Services warns you about a poison gas bomb that can kill animals and people in minutes. It is also not very intelligent placement because the chances of seeing the sign first when it is 25 feet away from the bomb are not 100 percent. If we know that why don't we use better sign placement. Putting the sign 25 feet away does not help in the way that if it was near, people would read the sign first and then examine the cyanide bomb, but it is 25 feet away from the sign so there is no promise of safety.

Weapons these deadly should not use two little, wood signs to warn people of their danger and that alone. No one in our neighborhood knew that these weapons existed until this incident occurred. No phone call or letter in the mail to tell people of the traps that will sooner or later kill someone or something. Wildlife Services is very lazy by placing these traps on BLM property and saying it was someone else's, not checking for close inhabitants, not having legible signs placed around the bomb, not warning neighbors of the bombs they placed and not creating a better way of protecting livestock a long time ago because this has happened many times before.

Wildlife Services also continues to say that these coyote cyanide bombs are ethical. How are these things ethical? Wildlife Services is using chemical warfare within feet of neighborhoods and putting them by houses to use them on nature. Not a very intelligent way of protecting livestock. Cyanide is one of the most deadly poisons as well. Cyanide

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has been used throughout history as a quick way of killing to murder large amounts of people in a short amount of time. Cyanide works by binding to the hemoglobin, which causes the cell to not be able to hold oxygen. This causes the victim to suffocate from the inside out. How is suffocating the victim humane and ethical. This could happen to anyone. We moved out here on Buckskin Road to be able to be in nature, but now we can not. Because of Wildlife Services being lazy and cheap.

My father, Mark Mansfield, is an experienced hunter and states that it is not hard to shoot coyotes. He says he would walk by some and continue walking because hunting them is not a big achievement. The coyotes also never bother us in our home. We hear them howling and I find it pleasant to listen to them. We had five dogs and they were never bothered by any coyotes. Which one is more dangerous: the coyotes or the coyote cyanide bomb? If you bring up the fact that it is used to protect sheep and livestock then which one costs more to fix: a few sheep with some lacerations or my dead \$10,000 hunting dog who I loved very much. You still can't put a price on him.

I miss my dog very much. He was my best adventuring buddy in the entire world. No amount of money or any sincere apology can replace my friend. However, my family will not be victims in this event. We will fight to make these bombs illegal because they are morally wrong. I thank you for reading my story and I hope you were affected by it. Please help me [make] these illegal because no boy should watch his dog die in his arms. Save someone else from the pain my family has suffered.

I love you Kasey.”

- Canyon Mansfield, Pocatello, Idaho

M-44 “cyanide bombs” have already killed countless dogs, endangered species and non-target wildlife. But will it take the death of a child to ban them nationwide?

Not if you help prevent further tragedies by supporting the Chemical Poisons Reduction Act, federal legislation which will be introduced in 2019 by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Oreg). It has been nicknamed “Canyon’s Law.”

Learn more & meet other M-44 victims at www.predatordefense.org.



As of April 2019 Canyon Mansfield and his family (pictured above) have traveled to D.C. twice to urge Congress to prevent other families from suffering similar tragedies by passing legislation to ban M-44s across the nation. They are highly motivated to act. In addition to the trauma of losing their dog, they know they came close to losing their son. Canyon was not only hospitalized, but has had to be closely monitored. He suffered excruciating migraine headaches since the poisoning, a side effect he had not yet experienced when he wrote his account.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Canyon Mansfield shared this account exclusively with the national wildlife advocacy nonprofit Predator Defense, which assisted the Mansfield family in dealing with the poisoning trauma, the media barrage, the stonewalling wildlife agencies, and the politics. Predator Defense accompanied the Mansfields on their 2017 and 2019 trips to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Congress and urge them support legislation to ban M-44s.