

For Immediate Release

June 13, 2017

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Groups Seek Immediate Ban on Use of M-44 'Cyanide Bombs' in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, *Wyo.* – A coalition of conservation and wildlife organizations today formally petitioned the Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for an immediate ban on the use of M-44 cyanide devices in Wyoming. Recent incidents caused by the predator-killing devices, including the killing of two family dogs in the state, as well as the hospitalization of a teenager and the death of his pet dog in Idaho, prompted the petition. A similar petition was filed in Idaho in March, after which Wildlife Services agreed to remove M-44s on all lands in Idaho.

“We’re not at war with native wildlife, and it is irresponsible to allow poison landmines to be sown anywhere in Wyoming,” said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project. “Wildlife Services got rid of M-44s in Idaho, and they should do the same in Wyoming before more pets, and even people, get hurt or killed.”

The organizations requested the immediate removal of all existing devices from the state. M-44s, also known as “cyanide bombs” and “coyote getters,” lead to the agonizing death of thousands of animals every year, many of them nontarget animals. Specifically, between 2000 and 2016, APHIS reported that M-44s in Wyoming killed 5,973 target animals, 112 nontarget animals including eight dogs, and 447 unclassified animals. In addition, at least two dogs have been killed so far in 2017.

“There is absolutely no reason for a government agency to be placing poisonous gas anywhere, much less mere yards from where people and pets live,” said Tara Zuardo, wildlife attorney with the Animal Welfare Institute. “Devices like these are not only extremely dangerous, but they also represent wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars and are the cause of tremendous suffering for both people and animals.”

“The incredibly dangerous devices kill indiscriminately, and deaths of pets are common,” said Brooks Fahy, director of Predator Defense. “Unless there are witnesses, agencies often don't record the poisonings. Families are then left to wonder what happened to their dog.”

“These incidents display the extremely dangerous and indiscriminate nature of M-44 cyanide bombs and Wildlife Services negligence,” said Michelle Lute, wildlife coexistence campaigner for WildEarth

Guardians. "Federal employees should not be placing deadly devices anywhere on our public or private lands, which should be safe for families to recreate with their companion animals."

"Cyanide bombs are indiscriminate killers that must be banned," said Andrea Santarsiere, a senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Any animal that might pull on the baited trigger is at risk, including endangered wildlife like grizzlies, as well as people and pets. And in just the past few months, these cruel devices have injured a child and killed an endangered wolf and several family dogs. Enough is enough."

Federal law requires Wildlife Services to provide a final decision in writing to the petitioners.

"Wyomingites place a high value on wildlife, as tourism is the second largest industry in the state with many visitors coming to see and photograph predators like foxes, wolves, bears and coyotes," said Kristin Combs, program director for Wyoming Untrapped. "To allow these devices to continue to wantonly kill our wildlife and beloved pets is both morally and financially reckless and irresponsible. There is no scientific evidence that M-44s are effective in reducing predation of livestock. It's way past time to ban these devices."

"Taxpayers should not be expected to continue funding the cruel slaughter of wildlife at the behest of agricultural producers' profits," said Stephen Wells, executive director of Animal Legal Defense Fund. "Cyanide bombs are indiscriminate and inhumane—and are a proven danger to humans and companion animals. These devices have no rightful place in wildlife policy."

"Many effective nonlethal alternatives exist to eliminate or reduce conflicts between livestock and predators," said Camilla Fox, executive director of Project Coyote. "It's time our federal government followed the lead of Washington, California and other states in banning these deadly poisons once and for all."

To view the petition, visit <https://www.westernwatersheds.org/wildlife-services-m-44-apa-wyoming-petition/>

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About the Animal Welfare Institute

The Animal Welfare Institute (awionline.org) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere—in the laboratory, on the farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild.

About The Animal Legal Defense Fund

The Animal Legal Defense Fund was founded in 1979 to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. To accomplish this mission, the Animal Legal Defense Fund files high-impact lawsuits to protect animals from harm; provides free legal assistance and training to prosecutors to assure that animal abusers are punished for their crimes; supports tough animal protection legislation and fights harmful legislation; and provides resources and opportunities to law students and professionals to advance the emerging field of animal law. For more information, please visit aldf.org.

About the Center for Biological Diversity

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with 1.1 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places:

www.biologicaldiversity.org

About Predator Defense

Predator Defense is a national nonprofit advocacy organization working to protect native predators and to end America's war on wildlife. For more information, visit www.predatordefense.org.

About Project Coyote

Project Coyote is a national nonprofit organization and a North American coalition of wildlife educators, scientists, ranchers, and community leaders promoting coexistence between people and wildlife, and compassionate conservation through education, science, and advocacy. For more information, visit

www.projectcoyote.org.

About Western Watersheds Project

Western Watersheds Project is an environmental conservation group dedicated to protecting and restoring western watersheds and wildlife, particularly on public lands. For more information, visit

www.westernwatersheds.org.

About WildEarth Guardians

WildEarth Guardians protects and restores the wildlife, wild places, wild rivers, and health of the American West. For more information, visit www.wildearthguardians.org.

About Wyoming Untrapped

Wyoming Untrapped is dedicated to creating a safe and humane environment for people, pets and wildlife through education, trapping regulation reform, and compassionate coexistence efforts. For more information, visit www.wyominguntrapped.org.

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