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Dog Dies After Tripping Device To Kill Predators

SALT LAKE CITY The state is investigating the death of a pet dog killed by a device meant for livestock predators. Samuel Pollock was hunting rabbits on federal land last month when he heard his dog Jenna, a Labrador-retriever-hound mix, gagging and retching. When he turned around, he spotted an M-44 – a device that shoots a pellet of sodium cyanide when an animal bites or otherwise disturbs it – sticking out of the ground. Jenna died about 90 seconds later, and there was nothing he could do but hold her, Pollock said.

Pollock said he saw on an entry road a sign warning of the deadly devices but contends there was no warning sign within 25 feet of the M-44 and it was within 50 feet of a pathway. Federal regulations require such warning signs within 25 feet and limit the placement of such devices to more than 50 feet from a public road or path. Pollock reported the incident to the state. An initial investigation by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food's wildlife service division found there was a sign within 8 feet of the device, said Mike Bodenchuk, the director of the APHIS program for the division. "We take that very seriously obviously we didn't set out to do anything like that," Bodenchuk said. Investigators did not see the dog, and it wasn't immediately known if a necropsy – an animal autopsy – was conducted.

Bodenchuk said the device was near a path made up of two tire tracks, but that the division didn't consider that the "public road or pathway" outlined in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. The device was on land managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management near Bruff Reservoir, which is about 15 miles to the southwest of Vernal. Dogs are allowed off leash on most BLM land, unless otherwise noted, said BLM spokeswoman Lola Bird. The area is popular for many forms of recreation, Pollock said. He said the path he was near is used by vehicles and should be considered a road. "It's just a shame. It's not that I mind sharing the land with the cattle at all. They have as much of a right to be out there as me," Pollock said. "I just don't think that they should be allowed to put this stuff on public land at all." M-44s are heavily regulated and mostly used in winter and spring months when cattle are susceptible to attack or cows are calving, Bodenchuk said. The devices are sprayed with a scent that attracts coyotes and other predators. The small metal tubes stick out of the ground, about a thumb's length. He said it is uncommon for dogs to be killed by the devices, and the only other dog death that has occurred in Utah this year happened on private land where the dog and owner were trespassing. The Environmental Protection Agency will be doing its own investigation. The EPA has already contacted a pesticide investigator for the state Department of Agriculture and Food, asking him to determine if the M-44 was used

according to regulations, said Larry Lewis, UDAF spokesman. Pollock said Jenna was about 2 years old. She was buried in his yard with her favorite football.

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