

Two Killers That Need To Go

By Predator Defense, www.predatordefense.org

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Contact: Brooks Fahy, (541) 937-4261 or (541) 520-6003

Predator Defense is committed to halting the use of two horrific poisons threatening American wildlife, pets, people, and national security. Both poisons—sodium fluoroacetate (commonly known as Compound 1080) and sodium cyanide (used in devices called M-44s)—are used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services lethal predator control program to kill wildlife species perceived as threats to livestock. Formerly called Animal Damage Control, Wildlife Services kills more than 100,000 native predators each year such as wolves, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, bears, and badgers.

Wildlife Services' love affair with poisons began with the program's inception in the early 1900s when the government exterminated nearly all the grizzly bears and wolves in the Lower-48. Today, the agency's use of poisons extends well beyond sodium cyanide and Compound 1080. Wildlife Services spends more than \$100 million annually to kill roughly five million animals, of which millions are poisoned. Without a doubt, the most dangerous poisons in the agency's arsenal are Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has rated both these poisons at Level 1 toxicity, the highest degree of acute toxicity.

Compound 1080—one of the world's deadliest poisons

In archaic fashion, to kill predators, Compound 1080 is put into a rubber bladder, called a livestock protection collar (or toxic collar), which is strapped around the neck of sheep and goats. The poison is ingested if a predator, such as a coyote or dog, pierces the collar while attempting to take down the animal. The collars are also punctured on thorns and other sharp objects such as barbed wire, thereby leaking this deadly poison into the environment.



Compound 1080 is a water-soluble, odorless, colorless, and tasteless poison that has no antidote. One teaspoon can reportedly kill up to 100 human adults. Absorbed through the stomach and intestines, open wounds or breaks in the skin, Compound 1080 causes the breakdown of essential cellular processes resulting in cell death and gross organ failure. Death may result from cardiac failure, progressive failure of the central nervous system, or respiratory arrest following severe prolonged convulsions.

It is obvious from victims' positions and conditions, including vomited lungs, distended veins, and evacuated bowels and bladders, that animals poisoned by Compound 1080 die a horrible, agonizingly painful death. Deer who have accidentally ingested Compound

1080 have been observed in their agony trying to rip open their own bellies and dogs are driven insane by the excruciating pain inflicted upon them before they succumb to death. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife, a wolf illegally poisoned with Compound 1080 in Idaho in 2003 was found with its body rigid and paws torn up from convulsions, and its teeth clenched.



M-44s—a reckless and widespread hazard

M-44 devices are spring-activated ejectors that deliver a deadly dose of sodium cyanide when they are activated. To set an M-44, a small pipe is driven into the ground and then loaded with the ejector containing a capsule with roughly one gram of sodium cyanide. The top of the ejector is wrapped with an absorbent material that has been coated with a substance that attracts canines. When an animal pulls on this material, a spring ejects the sodium cyanide into the animal's mouth and face. The force of the ejector can spray the cyanide granules up to five feet. Case records have shown that a poisoned animal can die within minutes or suffer for as long as eight hours.

Sodium cyanide causes dizziness, weakness, labored breathing, and nausea, which can be followed by a weak and irregular heartbeat, unconsciousness, convulsions, coma, and death. Sodium cyanide is an alkaline and thus irritating and corrosive to body tissues.

M-44s are primarily used to kill coyotes. However, any animal that is attracted to the bait may be lured and killed. As a result, many animals killed by M-44s are non-target species such as foxes, bears, deer, even eagles. M-44s account for 12,000 to 15,000 animal deaths annually and untold numbers of domestic dogs perish each year as well, because they are also drawn to the scent used on M-44s. Many wildlife experts believe that the deaths of non-target species are grossly underreported. Some believe that Wildlife Services does not report the true number of non-target species killed by M-44s for fear of jeopardizing funding for its lethal predator control program. It is extremely rare for Wildlife Services to record pet deaths. Former Wildlife Services agents have reported to Predator Defense that evidence of such deaths is often destroyed by agents who remove collars of dogs killed by M-44s and discard their bodies.

Sodium cyanide is extremely lethal to humans as well. Wildlife Services employees and anyone else who handles M-44s are instructed to carry the antidote, amyl nitrate, to counteract the cyanide should they be sprayed in the face. Others, including hikers and children who stumble across an M-44, have no such protection.

History of Compound 1080 and M-44 use

Prior to 1972, Compound 1080 was spread throughout the West to kill coyotes, wolves, eagles, and other animals perceived by private ranchers as threats to livestock. Wildlife Services, then known as Animal Damage Control, was largely responsible for this campaign, and Compound 1080 as well as other poisons found their way into the hands of ranchers and other individuals. The poison was broadcast in small baits from aircraft and was used on the ground in bait stations (horses, cattle, and sheep were killed and laced with the poison to attract and kill predators). Secondary poisoning from this

practice was catastrophic in that it had lasting effects on wolf, eagle, and black-footed ferret populations. Many carrion-eating species also took a heavy hit from this indiscriminate poisoning campaign. As a result, former President Nixon issued Executive Order 11643 in 1972, which banned the use of poisons to control predators on federal lands. Shortly thereafter, the EPA issued PR Notice 72-2, canceling all registered predator control uses of sodium fluoroacetate (Compound 1080), sodium cyanide (the poison used in M-44s), thallium, and strychnine.

In 1975, the EPA allowed M-44s to be reintroduced into Wildlife Services' arsenal. In 1981, President Reagan, bowing to the ranching industry, signed Executive Order 12342 revoking President Nixon's ban on the poisons. In 1985, the EPA granted the U.S. Department of Interior registration for the use of Compound 1080 in toxic collars. In 1986, the authority for the use of toxic collars was transferred to USDA Wildlife Services' lethal predator control program.



Poisons unnecessary

Despite the existence of a wide variety of effective alternatives to lethal predator control such as human presence (shepherds), predator-proof fencing, guard animals, electronic sound and light devices, night penning, shed lambing, and carcass removal, Wildlife Services continues to rely on these indiscriminate, dangerous, cruel, and ecologically damaging poisons. Because of the wide array of effective non-lethal predator control methods available to safeguard livestock, there is simply no reason to take the enormous risks posed by Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide.

A threat to national security

Compound 1080's risk to national security is glaringly obvious. In 2005, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report revealed that the poison (manufactured at the Tull Chemical Company plant in Oxford, Alabama) had been found in Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons laboratory. The report documented Iraq's testing of the poison for potential use in political assassinations.

In April 2003, an article published in The Evening Standard (London) reported that a colonel in the Iraqi Internal Security Service claimed to have damning evidence directly linking Saddam Hussein to horrific crimes against humanity, including poisoning people with Compound 1080. The colonel said: "We would take people to the police station and give them a drink laced with sodium fluoroacetate [Compound 1080] ... then we would let them go. Later, they would die and no one knew it was us."

The potential for bioterrorism from widespread distribution of Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide (the M-44's toxicant) should not be underestimated. Due to the insidious and extremely dangerous nature of these poisons, the FBI has acknowledged that they are "highly toxic pesticides judged most likely to be used by terrorists or for malicious intent." The FBI and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service list Compound 1080 as a

substance that may be sought for use as a possible chemical warfare agent in public water supplies. As early as 1999, the U.S. Air Force identified Compound 1080 as a likely biological agent.

Public outrage escalates

In recent years, public outrage over the use of Compound 1080 and M-44s has heightened with: Extensive press coverage about people and dogs being poisoned; the CIA report (declassified in 2005) documenting Iraq's testing of Compound 1080; two audits by the USDA's Office of Inspector General that found Wildlife Services' inventory control was sloppy and the program could not account for poison stockpiles; and continuing reports of deaths of non-target animals including wolves, bald eagles, and pets. People have also been poisoned by M-44s.

Because of the dangers and cruelty associated with these poisons, citizens in California (1998) and Washington State (2000) passed ballot initiatives banning the use of M-44s and livestock protection collars containing Compound 1080. In 1998, the Wildlife Services' lethal predator control program did not use Compound 1080 in livestock protection collars in Oregon at the behest of Governor John Kitzhaber.

KEY POINTS about COMPOUND 1080 and M-44s

- Compound 1080 and M-44s are extremely dangerous and inhumane.
- Compound 1080 is one of the deadliest poisons on earth and has no antidote.
- Compound 1080 is a potential terrorist threat to water and food supplies.
- These poisons are not selective—they often kill non-target species, including endangered species and pets.
- People have been seriously harmed by M-44s and Compound 1080; at least 16 people have died from exposure to Compound 1080.
- Paradoxically, killing coyotes increases their numbers. Read a letter by wildlife ecologist Dr. Robert Crabtree at www.predatordefense.org/coyotes.htm. Click on "Read Dr. Crabtree's letter" below "Coyote Control: Is it Effective or Necessary?"
- Rather than killing predators, ranchers should make use of good husbandry practices such as guard animals, electronic sound and light devices, night penning, lambing in structures, promptly removing any carcasses, and fencing appropriately.
- Spending public taxpayer money to poison wildlife for the benefit of select private businesses and landowners is unacceptable and out of step with American values.
- The impact of Compound 1080 and M-44s on preventing livestock losses is miniscule and therefore not worth the profound risks and harm they cause to wildlife populations and ecosystems. Combined, the poisons consist of roughly 0.003% of all lethal control conducted by Wildlife Services. Meanwhile, predation is

one of the smallest causes of livestock loss (behind disease, birthing problems, weather, digestive issues, even poisoning!).

- Wildlife Services' own records show numerous mistakes made and risks taken with these poisons. Once the toxicants are in the field, they are essentially uncontrolled. Only 60% of animals are found after an M-44 firing. More than 100 collars are punctured or damaged each year, spilling Compound 1080 onto surrounding lands.