

Testimony on SB580
a bill to prohibit use of the M44 cyanide device
used to control wildlife
by
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To: Representative Brad Witt, Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources, Salem, Or.

Dear Chairman Witt and Committee Members:

Oregon legislators have a real opportunity with the passage of SB580 to lead the effort in banning the M44 cyanide device. This passage will hopefully spread to the rest of the nation.

This testimony in support of SB580 is a plea to the desire in all of us to treat all animals with compassion. I spent over 20 yrs. in private practice as a veterinarian and clinic owner. My life from a child, to a pre-vet student at NMSU, to a student and graduate of the WSU School of Veterinary Medicine, and eventually as a retired veterinarian and Advisory Board member of several wildlife advocacy non-profit groups, has been focused on caring for all animals, whether they are pets, livestock, or wildlife. Humane treatment of all animals and protection from abuse and cruelty has been at the forefront of my conduct throughout my life. Animal abuse lies at the opposite spectrum of conduct, and, thankfully we have laws to prevent animal cruelty. Animal abuse by definition is the intentional infliction of pain, suffering, harm, or death to any animal. M44 cyanide definitely fits into this category of abuse and cruelty. Yet, why have we allowed for decades for a federal agency to exist, acting since 1931 under the Animal Damage Control Act, and now under USDA's APHIS agency as Wildlife Services (a much more benign name belying its true task of killing predators) whose mission has been to eradicate predators by employing all means of horrific methods?

These methods included, throughout history, the use of strychnine, a poison causing convulsive cramping and a cruel death by asphyxiation, to introducing sarcoptic mange into the wild canid population (mainly wolves and coyotes) causing a slow, yet again, cruel death from exposure due to loss of protective fur, to gut-shooting predators from planes and helicopters, to trapping which allows again for a slow death by dehydration, starvation, injury, or exposure, to the now infamous M44 cyanide device which ejects cyanide when activated into the mouth of any unsuspecting animal whether it be wildlife, pets, or humans. Believe me, as a veterinarian, no one wants to witness any animal dying of acute cyanide poisoning which causes extreme shortness of breath, agitation, severe suffocation and convulsions, followed by agonal death.. Witnessing the agonizing death throes of coyotes in documentary films in veterinary school of what poisons like strychnine and Compound 1080, one of the deadliest poisons devised, did to predators was extremely disturbing and heart-breaking. M44s cause as brutal a death. Unbelievably, Wildlife Services' website states that "animals killed by M44s show no overt signs of distress or pain." This is an outrageous statement and as outright lie! Just read some of the owners' personal accounts of witnessing their dog's demise after contacting the cyanide ejected into their mouths after pulling on the smelly bait used to attract animals. Many of these excruciating deaths occurred while out with their owners on a simple walk or hike on public or private lands.

Reasons to ban M44s are (1) they are inhumane and indiscriminate in their method of killing animals. (2) they are a public safety hazard for humans and pets who don't expect to encounter a hidden deadly device while our recreating outside. Think of these as land mines when you or your child or pet accompanies you on what should be a pleasant walk in our forests or countryside. (3) they are a tremendous waste of our money as taxpayers, because in the end M44s do not lead to "teaching" the other members of the predator pack to not engage in depredation of livestock. These devices, which kill non-targeted predators, have been scientifically proven to actually lead to an increase in populations of predators, such as coyotes, due to the disruption of the social structure of the pack, where litters face less competition and thrive. In other words, M44s are outdated and their use is not "good" science when focus should be on ecologically sound non-lethal methods.

There is strong public sentiment against the use of M44 cyanide devices. All of you as legislators now have the chance to rally around this sentiment and ban the M44 and forever dump this horrific poison onto the trash heap of bygone barbaric devices.

Respectfully submitted,

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