

USDA Wildlife Services poisoned my son—and now they want YOU to let them off the hook
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In March, my family lived a nightmare. My youngest son, Canyon, had to watch as his dog Casey—a beloved companion and best friend—die right before his eyes just outside our home when the pair encountered an M-44 Cyanide Bomb. This poison ejector, set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program sprayed deadly cyanide in their faces, killing Casey and poisoning Canyon. In a matter of seconds, Wildlife Services stole a member of my family, a piece of my son's innocence forever, and my community's sense of security.

We never did not want an apology from Wildlife Services, that would be insulting. However, we did want Wildlife Services to at least acknowledge us and their actions rather than go straight to the media and their PR person. To Wildlife Services my dog was just a "non-target take" and my family is just a public relations problem. Sadly, I learned that this is how they do it, they go on a PR campaign rather than attempt to do right where they have done wrong many times. They spend a lot of energy on their public relations campaigns rather than having a relationship with the public. There was absolutely no concern about Canyon's health. We did not share much about the toxic exposure that Canyon experienced at the deadly hand of Wildlife Services. We were scared and mostly private about his health. Nevertheless, Canyon experienced the worse headaches of his life for a month straight, they did not go away day or night. He had nausea and vomiting and numb hands. We talked with a regional toxicologist and he had to see a neurologist. He underwent a brain MRI and multiple blood tests. At 14 years of age my son suffered immensely. He came to our room many nights when he "attempted" to sleep in his room. He did not sleep much for a month. All of this does not even begin to address the emotional burden that being sick weighs on a boy, not to mention seeing the shadows form in Casey Mansfield's eyes as his life left him. In the meanwhile the only peep anyone ever heard from Wildlife Services was their POLITICAL RELATIONS person commenting to various news organizations across the nation. Oh, sorry, public relations person.

Wildlife Services used to be called Animal Damage Control but this federal agency has so many mishaps that instead of changing their behavior they chose to do the political thing, they changed their name. Wildlife Services has spent more time on public relations campaigns than relationships with the public. Now, Wildlife Services is on a three-city self-promotional tour across Idaho, assuring the public that Cyanide Bombs are somehow safe and necessary. The use of these horrific devices is temporarily on hold in Idaho so that the agency can "review" their use—as if tweaking their procedures just a bit will make it ok to expose Americans to deadly poisons—and this series of public meetings is a thinly-veiled attempt to justify going back to business as usual. Cyanide bombs are coming back to Idaho! Clearly, Wildlife Services takes Idahoans for fools.

They hurt my son badly and they want to keep hurting people. How many pets have to die and how many people have to get hurt to make them feel any sense of caution or remorse? How many is too much in their minds for the numbers of livestock taken in Idaho by predators? This is a public safety issue but Wildlife Services wants to make it monetary. They quote that 3700 head of livestock were lost to predators in Idaho in 2015. Firstly, there are better methods for predator control that their own Wildlife Services biologists studies and published yet Wildlife Services ignores such studies and opts to put our lives at risk using an archaic method of indiscriminant animal control. Secondly, every time they quote how much money is lost by predators I think to myself, do they even care about the lives of those injured by Cyanide Bombs? Does Wildlife Services care about the death toll of our pets? Do they even

think for a second that my son Canyon Mansfield was just inches from death and that they nearly murdered him? What about the fear of people going out into the wild? How many livestock lives is a child worth?

Subsequent to this and other incidents they will tell you that they have increased the rules and policies which they have to follow. Let there be no doubt, many of these rules that they did not follow were already in place, and they often do not follow their own rules. The bombs that were by my home were unmarked, no flags and no one was notified of their placing. Do you really think that people are going to believe you that you will suddenly start following more rules when it is well documented that you don't follow your rules in the first place?

The agency's refrain in these meetings, though cloaked in bureaucratic jargon, is "ranchers made us do it." Wildlife Services claims that their Cyanide Bombs are critical to protecting livestock from "nuisance" animals like coyotes—that our community's ranchers want the agency to use these deadly devices. This is not only an attempt to pass off blame, but also an insult to Idaho's agricultural businesses. Ranchers did not kill my dog, and they did not poison my son—Wildlife Services did. This isn't an ideological fight about the agriculture industry. Ranchers want predator control. They have pets, grandchildren and children. They do not want innocent people to continue getting hurt. They just want predator control, it is as simple as that.

Most of the dogs killed by Wildlife Services are never mentioned but just thrown away and buried and most of those dogs are hunting dogs, all of them are family dogs and many people are hurt badly like my son. In true fashion, Wildlife Services recently started a public relations campaign talking about the second most common predator to sheep and "goats" being a feral dog. That is a flat out lie. All of the sudden it is an emphasis against dogs! Nice political move, attack those who are attacking you, and their dogs that you killed. Again, public relations rather than relationships with the public. We see right through you Wildlife Services. These are not feral dogs, my dog was not feral, my child is not feral, the little girl in Wyoming who saw her hunting dogs die was not feral, the man in Utah who saw his hunting dog die was not feral and the man who was permanently disabled by a Cyanide Bomb was not feral. None of these people named will ever be the same. Let us not be tricked, this is an announcement that they do not care about you and they are bringing the indiscriminate, kill-everything-around-you chemical used in the holocaust back! Wildlife Services is the feral branch of the USDA.

I hope no other family ever has to experience what we went through; no parent should have to worry that their child will be poisoned while playing in their back yard, and no parent should have to feel the helplessness of watching a child suffer the pain of losing a pet, companion and best friend—suffering and gasping before succumbing to cyanide poisoning, all without warning.

My son will always carry with him the deep pain of losing his best friend far too early, and the trauma of having to watch his loyal pet cry out in pain, go into seizures, and die. I fear the devastating memories will far outlast his migraines and other physiological symptoms. I would do anything for my son, but I'm powerless to change what happened to him—what Wildlife Services did to him, and to my family. We are determined to make sure that no other family has to endure what we did. I want Wildlife Services to know that our community stands by us.

USDA Wildlife Services is having an "informational" meeting on the M-44 Cyanide Bomb on Thursday night, July 27 at the Idaho State University Pond Student Union Building from 7-9 PM. This is no educational seminar, it is a disguise, it is an announcement that they are going to restart the placing of

the cyanide bombs back onto our lands! This is another assault on our community. Please join me at this meeting and be sure your voice is heard.

As an Idahoan, I'm insulted. As a doctor, I'm worried. As a taxpayer, I'm angry. But as a father, I'm determined. My family and I never wanted to be "activists"; we are busy with and fulfilled by our wonderful children and our community—church, school, friends and neighbors that have made Pocatello our perfect home. But a cause found us, and we believe that by the grace of God Canyon was saved. We believe that when you are blessed in such a way you must stand up fight for what is right, it is a calling. We do not plan to give up. Please join us...at

Does someone have to die for them to realize that they should accept the biological scientists who tell them there is a better way? When there is a dead body the blood will be on their hands.

It's time to pass Canyon's Law, H.R. 1817, and ban M-44s, be sure to call Congressman Mike Simpson and Senators Risch and Crapo.