

For Immediate Release

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Federal Wildlife-killing Agency Agrees to Halt Use of M-44 “Cyanide Bombs” in Idaho

HAILEY, *Idaho* – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services program – which kills thousands of predators across the country annually – announced today it has abandoned use of M-44 cyanide bombs in Idaho in response to a [petition](#) filed by 19 conservation and wildlife organizations two weeks ago. In a [letter](#) transmitted to conservation groups today, the USDA agency Wildlife Services announced that it has ceased the use of M-44 cyanide bombs on all private, state, and federal lands in Idaho, and has removed all M-44s that were deployed in the state.

“This is an important victory, at least a temporary one, for both wildlife and for public safety across Idaho,” said Erik Molvar, executive director with Western Watersheds Project. “We thank Wildlife Services for doing the right thing by removing these deadly and indiscriminate killing devices, and urge them to make the moratorium permanent.”

The petition to stop using M-44s was filed in response to an incident near Pocatello, Idaho where a 14-year-old boy was sprayed with cyanide and his dog was killed.

"This could well be the tipping point that leads to a nationwide ban of these extraordinarily dangerous devices via the legislation introduced in Congress last month," said Brooks Fahy, executive director of the national wildlife advocacy group, Predator Defense. "As the recent cases in Idaho, Wyoming and Oregon amply demonstrate, M-44s endanger non-target wildlife, pets and children, no matter how they are used."

M-44 devices are spring-loaded and tipped with deadly sodium cyanide. The device blasts poison on any animal or person that triggers them.

“We’re glad to see these indiscriminate killing devices being pulled from Idaho – that’s an important step toward protecting wildlife, people and pets from these cyanide bombs,” said Andrea Santarsiere, a senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. “We hope this

ban becomes permanent not just in Idaho but across the country, because there are no place for these devices where the lives of innocent people and animals will not be at risk.”

In November 2016, Wildlife Services committed to a moratorium on the use of M-44s on public lands in Idaho, but the Pocatello poisoning incident, resulting from an M-44 placed in February 2017, occurred on BLM lands nonetheless. The letter expands the moratorium to lands of all jurisdictions and ownerships, including state and private lands.

“Although a step in the right direction, the federal government must do more to ensure the safety of all Americans, our dogs and wildlife,” said Michelle Lute, wildlife coexistence campaigner for WildEarth Guardians. “We won't rest until a national, permanent ban on M-44 cyanide bombs is instituted and strictly enforced.”

Despite the sweeping nature of the moratorium and the removal of M-44s throughout the state, it might not amount to a permanent ban. In its letter, Wildlife Services informed the groups that “WS will notify you 30 days prior to placing any new M-44s in Idaho.”

“We welcome the news of a temporary ban, although we remind activists and taxpayers that Wildlife Services has made no commitment to cease the use of M-44s for any definite period,” says Animal Legal Defense Fund executive director Stephen Wells. “These deadly, inhumane devices could go back into use as soon as next month, so we must remain vigilant.”

“We intend to inform the public right away if Wildlife Services notifies us that they intend to reverse the moratorium and place M-44s anywhere in Idaho,” Molvar said.

The groups petitioning for the M-44 ban were Western Watersheds Project, Predator Defense, WildEarth Guardians, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Nevada Wildlife Alliance, Gallatin Wildlife Association, Environmental Protection Information Center, the Wolf Conservation Center, Wilderness Watch, Klamath Forest Alliance, Northeast Oregon Ecosystems, Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, Footloose Montana, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Project Coyote, Voices of Wildlife, and the Mountain Lion Foundation.