

Analysis: Public Overwhelmingly Wants EPA Ban on Wildlife-killing ‘Cyanide Bombs’

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More than 99.9 percent of people commenting on a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposal to reauthorize sodium cyanide in wildlife-killing devices called M-44s support a ban on these “cyanide bombs,” according to an analysis released today.

Cyanide bombs inhumanely and indiscriminately kill thousands of animals every year. The analysis of public comments was done by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Western Environmental Law Center.

Earlier this year, the EPA issued a [proposed interim decision](#) renewing sodium cyanide registration for use in M-44s and opened a public comment period. More than 22,400 people submitted comments.

Of those, just 10 submissions asked the EPA to renew its registration of M-44s.

“Cyanide traps are indiscriminate killers that can’t be used safely by anyone, anywhere,” said Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “We’re fighting for a permanent nationwide ban, which is the only way to protect people, pets and imperiled wildlife from this poison.”

EPA’s registration authorizes use of the deadly devices by [Wildlife Services](#) — a secretive wildlife-killing program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture — as well as by state agencies in South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico and Texas.

The devices spray deadly sodium cyanide into the mouths of unsuspecting coyotes, foxes and other carnivores lured by smelly bait. Anything or anyone that pulls on the baited M-44 device can be killed or severely injured by the deadly spray.

M-44s temporarily blinded a child and killed three family dogs in two incidents in Idaho and Wyoming in 2017. A wolf was also accidentally killed by an M-44 set in Oregon that year. In response, Idaho instituted an ongoing moratorium on M-44 use on public lands, and Oregon this week passed legislation banning them in the state.

“It is far past time to eliminate these cruel killing devices altogether,” said Kelly Nokes, Shared Earth wildlife attorney for the Western Environmental Law Center. “M-44s are an inhumane relic of the past and an unnecessary safety risk that have no place on our public landscape in 2019. We call on EPA to revoke its registration of this poison and protect the American public from these barbaric sodium cyanide bombs once and for all.”

According to Wildlife Services' own data, M-44s killed 13,232 animals, mostly coyotes and foxes, in 2017. Of these, more than 200 deaths were nontarget animals, including a wolf, family dogs, opossums, raccoons, ravens and skunks. These numbers are likely a significant undercount of the true death toll, as Wildlife Services is notorious for poor data collection and an entrenched "shoot, shovel, shut up" mentality.

Background

A bipartisan group of federal lawmakers last week introduced legislation, H.R. 2471 and S. 1301, to ban M-44s nationwide.

In response to a 2017 lawsuit brought by the Center and its allies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [agreed](#) to analyze impacts of M-44s on endangered wildlife by the end of 2021. Another 2017 lawsuit by the wildlife advocates prompted Wildlife Services in Colorado to temporarily [halt](#) the use of M-44s while it completes a new environmental analysis on its wildlife-killing program.

In November, EPA denied a [2017 petition](#) authored by the Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians that asked for a nationwide ban on M-44s.

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