

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR WOOLGROWERS AUTHORIZED

Emergency use of a cyanide device for killing coyotes has been authorized for use in restricted areas of the West to provide relief to livestock producers who have suffered high losses this year, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said today.

"I must stress that this is an emergency measure consistent with the provisions of Presidential Executive Order 11643. The M-44 cyanide device will be used only after Fish and Wildlife Service personnel document the local need for its employment to cut high sheep and goat losses," Morton said.

The M-44 is a spring-loaded cyanide ejecting tube placed in the ground. It is among the most humane and selective control tools known as death occurs almost instantly when scented bait triggers a puff of cyanide into the coyote's mouth when it tugs at it. When used professionally, it is safe and selective. There is little hazard to human beings. The toxicant either decomposes or is metabolized immediately. It does not persist in the environment or enter the food chain. Areas where these devices are used will be clearly marked with warning signs.

The use of chemical toxicants such as the M-44 on Federal lands for controlling predators except in defined emergency situations was banned by Executive Order in February 1972. Since the time of that order Federal, State, and private agencies have increased efforts to control coyotes with other methods such as aircraft, traps, denning, and hunting.

There are some areas where topography and vegetation have hampered these control programs. It is in these localized areas, whether public or private land, where the livestock, sheep, and goat losses have been high and this is where the emergency procedures of the Executive Order will be implemented.

The Federal agencies involved have jointly developed new procedures to permit the use of the M-44 in the emergency period. Under the new procedure a rancher, land user, or land administrator, when faced with losses that cannot be avoided by the usual methods, would request emergency consideration from Regional Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The request for emergency action will be immediately appraised and documented in the field by Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. An authorization to provide relief will then be issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director only if it is within the guidelines approved by the Federal agencies, and it is determined that a true emergency situation exists and that other methods are not applicable. His decision will be relayed immediately to the Fish and Wildlife Service field force who will place and control the M-44 devices.

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The Environmental Protection Agency permit allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to use the M-44 device during the emergency period. The permit was granted under provisions of Section 5 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, as amended, and will be effective through October 31. Without such authority from the EPA, it would not be possible to implement the emergency procedures announced today by Secretary Morton.

The permit also requires the Department of the Interior in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency to gather data in each situation on the efficiency of the device and its use, and additional information on its possible effect on the environment.

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