



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PLANS MAJOR REVISIONS IN CONTROL OF PREDATORY ANIMALS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced several steps to make its program for control of coyotes more effective in areas where they are causing serious problems for livestock raisers.

Robert A. Jantzen, Director of the Service, in a briefing held for Western Senators and Congressmen, emphasized his agency would continue to concentrate on "individuals or local populations" of the predators, as contrasted to any effort to control coyote populations over vast areas.

"Our objective is to operate a responsive, professional program in full recognition of the importance of predators to natural ecosystems," Jantzen said. "And, in carrying out our mission of conserving wildlife and wildlife habitats, we are prepared to act when some wildlife excessively damages society's other interests."

Jantzen said the Service:

1. Has asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to register the toxic chemical Compound 1080 for use in sheep collars. The collars, developed over a period of years by Service researchers, are fitted on sheep so that an animal biting the sheep's neck receives a lethal dose of the poison. Jantzen said experiments during the past year by the Service's Denver Wildlife Research Center and by Texas A&M University have shown this use of 1080 to be highly selective; only coyotes were affected in the field tests, he said.
2. Plans to apply to EPA for an experimental use permit to conduct limited field trials in Texas and Montana of several other 1080 delivery systems.

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3. Is revising a two-year-long curtailment of "denning"--the practice of killing coyotes in their dens--so it can be used as a control method in restricted circumstances. Fumigation of the den or shooting of the animals will be allowed "where damage to domestic animals is occurring or is expected to occur, and where such damage is the result of or can be attributed to food procurement for the young."

Control of animals and birds causing damage to agriculture has been the responsibility of the Government since 1931, under mandate from Congress. Predator control is primarily conducted in the West on both private and public lands. In fiscal year 1980, some \$7.6 million in Federal funds was spent to alleviate damage by controlling predators. Shooting and trapping have been employed, as well as cyanide dispensed by the M-44, a baited, spring-activated ejector considered highly selective to coyotes.

Jantzen today said he plans to recommend that EPA modify 10 of the 26 existing restrictions on M-44 use. This action would allow M-44 to be employed to protect wildlife, including the endangered whooping crane, as well as domestic livestock and poultry. At present the Service must seek an emergency permit--a time-consuming process--to use the M-44 to protect the cranes, whose eggs have been lost to coyotes at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. Other M-44 recommendations by Jantzen include modifications in placement of warning signs, record keeping, and changes of wording to clarify or update some restrictions.

Jantzen also said he was ordering Fish and Wildlife Service researchers to step up development and field testing of chemicals other than 1080 which show promise of being effective coyote control agents and present minimal hazards to other species.

The Fish and Wildlife Director said his decisions on predator control would be guided by "scientific findings and sound wildlife management principles, not emotional or political rhetoric." The changes announced today, he added,

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"recognize the agricultural industry is a vitally important one to the nation, and priority efforts will be made to provide adequate protection."

Concerning losses of sheep—the heaviest hit victims of coyotes—Jantzen said, "While estimates of losses vary from area to area, there is no doubt that losses are significant. The Fish and Wildlife Service will make needed changes to provide more effective control measures."

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