

Poisoned marijuana grows are silencing our forests

BY JAKOB SHOCKEY

Whether you support it or not, marijuana cultivation has become increasingly rooted in our local community and economy, bringing boutique fertilizer stores, cheap weed and a fall migration of slightly disheveled “trimmigrants” to our area. Many growers also bring deadly harm to this valley’s wildlife through their use of common rat poisons. These anticoagulant rodenticides (ARs) are spread thickly around the cannabis plantings and along irrigation lines to kill rodents that might eat the plants or chew irrigation pipes. Unfortunately, whether this happens on our public land or a private parcel, these poisons, often flavored as bacon, cheese or apple, target the bottom of a wild food chain and work their way up the chain.

In a study published last summer in the academic journal *PLOS ONE*, researchers found that threatened Pacific fishers are being exposed to and poisoned by these rodenticides on public land. The Pacific fisher was once found across the Pacific Northwest but is now isolated to small populations, one of which is in our State of Jefferson. They look like small, shorthaired wolverines and eat mainly porcupines but also rodents, birds and opportunistically anything that seems tasty.

In the spring, while cannabis seedlings are being planted and d-CON, a popular brand of rat poison, is spread, fishers are nursing their milk-dependent

kits in tree cavity dens. At this fragile moment, the effect of these poisons is amplified on the fisher population, for if the mother dies she leaves three or four young to perish as well. This study highlighted one case where four dead kits were tested for poison after their mother stopped returning to the den. AR poison had been transferred though her milk, although the kits died from dehydration and starvation.

Pacific fishers are not the only wildlife at risk. Rodents can continue to live seven days after ingesting a lethal dose of anticoagulant rodenticides. Anything that eats the exposed rodents or that might try a flavored pellet can be poisoned. Exposure has been documented in hawks, eagles, falcons, owls (including our Northern Spotted Owl), foxes, bobcats and mountain



Pacific fishers are being poisoned by rodenticides when they are nursing their milk-dependent kits. Photo: fs.usda.gov.

lions. In their 2012 paper, these researchers suggest using lethal compounds that don’t have the same ability to move up the food chain, like zinc phosphide, a readily available rodenticide.

I, for one, will look into it. For while I do not grow marijuana, I live in a cabin with rodent issues. It is maddening to wake up and find mouse droppings next to my coffee grinder and it

would be convenient to tuck a few packets of d-CON under the porch. However, last year I saw a Pacific fisher not 50 yards from this cabin. It was perched 15 feet up a ponderosa pine, intensely watching a covey of quail move through the blackberries below. The evening was on, and I paused, watching until its crouched form was no longer visible against the night, and the quail had ceased their scratching.

It is for moments like this that I live in the Applegate, where my daily activities can sometimes bump into the workings of the wild world. While researching alternative pest management strategies may be a lot more work than grabbing some d-CON from the local grocery store, I think it is worth it to protect this special place that we live in.

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Ed. Note: According to *bigbudsmag.com*, Oregon is “one of the only states that will soon require all marijuana sold at dispensaries to be tested for mold and pesticides.” House Bill 3460, which was signed into law by Governor Kitzhaber in August 2013 and goes into effect on March 1, 2014, authorizes the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to establish procedures to license and regulate medical marijuana dispensaries. A key provision of the new law requires testing of marijuana for mold, mildew and pesticides. At present, the rules advisory committee appointed by OHA is still sorting out “complicated questions” about the issue of testing marijuana, which is “not as easy as it may seem.” Those questions include: “How often should marijuana be tested? What standards should the labs follow? Are any levels of mold, mildew and pesticide acceptable?” The committee’s draft of rules is expected to be completed in early December 2013. This bill, of course, will have no effect on illegal grows.

Gen Y Worldview Medicinal marijuana: Opening the floodgates of health

BY JESSE HART

Make way for redefining hemp as potentially the best medicine since Nana’s chicken soup. Since only a fraction of jobs in our struggling economy come with health insurance, and pharmaceuticals create more problems than they cure, Generation Y (and many older and younger than we) have had to make do with good old-fashioned *natural* medicines. Some define naturopathic practices as “New Age,” but in truth many currently popular techniques like meditation, yoga, herbs and “herb” are thousands of years old and only recently (in the last century) have been labeled with negative clichés.

Pot, known in therapeutic circles as medicinal marijuana or cannabis, is rapidly shifting in public view of it as a recreational drug to simply good medicine generating little to no side effects (perhaps a few extra pounds if you aren’t careful). Scientifically speaking, it is less physically and mentally addictive than nicotine, alcohol and even caffeine. Just “10 to 30% of regular users will develop dependency. Only about 9% will have a serious addiction” (from *The Science of Marijuana* by Leslie L. Iverson, University of Cambridge).

For decades the general public has been convinced of the negative stereotypes of marijuana to the point of becoming prejudicial to those who use it. Although

marijuana has been called a dangerous gateway drug, pharmaceuticals are now taking the lead in that category. “An eight-year study comparing the number of deaths from marijuana use to 17 Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved drugs conducted from January 1, 1997 to June 30, 2005, showed zero direct deaths from marijuana and 11,687 from the 17 FDA-approved drugs” (medicalmarijuana.procon.org).

It seems as though marijuana, known predominately for its nonaggressive properties, is privately enjoyed or experimented with behind many closed doors around America. “Marijuana is the third most popular recreational drug in America (behind only alcohol and tobacco), and has been used by nearly 100 million Americans. According to government surveys, some 25 million Americans have smoked marijuana in the past year, and more than 14 million do so regularly... Our public policies should reflect this reality, not deny it” (norml.org; National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws).

If you think it’s only a matter of time before the federal government gets involved and takes over, think again; the US government has been losing ground fast on controlling the booming

industry. Michael Lotfi, associate director for the Tenth Amendment Center (an organization intending to confirm the understanding of the people at the time the constitution was adopted, that powers not granted to the United States were reserved to the states or to the people) exclaims, “According to the Associated Press, the Justice Department said that states can allow citizens to use the drug, license people to grow it and allow them to purchase it in stores. As long as the drug is kept away from the black market, children and federal property—it’s a go! ... Marijuana prohibition, just like alcohol prohibition decades ago, is absolutely nothing more or less than a cash cow for corrupt, unconstitutional government agencies.”

I will admit that through high school, I was against using pot in any respect. It wasn’t until I had a serious knee injury in 2006 when I was 19 that I gave it a try to help me deal with excruciating pain from a torn MCL (medial collateral ligament), ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) and fractured fibula. My doctors had prescribed copious amounts of Vicodin and Percoset. These pharmaceutical drugs did take the pain away and produced quite a high, for a time. But I found that the artificial high was always followed by a withdrawal of extreme anger, sadness, all-around confusion, and a body that felt depleted and abused. A friend asked me if I ever smoked pot for the pain; admittedly, I hadn’t known it to have any medicinal properties. But I decided to try it and, to my surprise, not only did my knee pain

subside, but also my knee felt like new! The medication was only a few puffs rather than a few pills, and the relief lasted twice as long as the meds. Plus, when I came off the drug I had no withdrawal.

During the past 12 months I have been managing an alternative medicine clinic in Grants Pass and more recently another in Ashland. Besides prescribing medicinal marijuana cards, we are working hard to attract more alternative medicines and practices that will help in the healing of our community. I have been primarily focusing on the practice of yoga and just recently began instructing others in beginner classes. My entire body hasn’t felt this good since my senior year at Hidden Valley High School some ten years ago—my knee included.

So maybe some are into alternative medicines for chasing a high, maybe some are in it for money, but I am in it—as I see that most are—for the healing. It worked for me, and it was easier, cheaper and more fun than seeing a doctor and hoping he/she could dispense a “magic pill.”

Now I am a firm believer, or rather a factual knower, that the body desires to heal, and what it needs is much simpler than you would imagine. Young or old, big or small, good health is your natural birthright. I trust that as more studies find their way into the mainstream, marijuana and other alternative medicines are going to open the floodgates for the overall health of this entire country.

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