

WHO PAYS FOR BEAR TRAPPING?

Lane County has called in the USDA's controversial Wildlife Services to trap a bear out of its Rattlesnake Road waste disposal site. But Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense questions why Lane County is spending the money to trap a bear when it's letting criminals out of its jail.

Oregon has an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 black bears according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and bears showing up around human habitation is not uncommon.

Bears are attracted to food, pet food, fruit and garbage, according to ODFW, and that's something dumps have in abundance. Fahy says there have been reports of holes in the fence around the dump and asks, rather than trap the bear, "Why aren't they fixing the fence line?" and adds, "This is a dump. We all know we have to secure the facilities."

Jeff Bishop, waste management superintendent, says that breaches in site fences are repaired as they are reported, "which at some sites is pretty frequently."

Fahy says after Wildlife Services live traps a bear, it is usually killed. Predator Defense has sought to end federal funding of Wildlife Services. Fahy cites a recent investigation by the *Sacramento Bee* that revealed that using traps, snares and poison, Wildlife Services employees "have accidentally killed more than 50,000 animals since 2000 that were not problems, including federally protected golden and bald eagles; more than 1,100 dogs, including family pets; and several species considered rare or imperiled by wildlife biologists."

Congressman Peter DeFazio has called for cutting federal funding to Wildlife Services.

Lane County voted not to renew its contract with Wildlife Services in 2005, according to Predator Defense, but Bishop says as a condition of the disposal sites' operating permits measures must be in place for issues such as "birds, rodents and other vectors." Bishop says waste management does contract with Wildlife Services for things like bear activity. The funding comes from the Solid Waste Fund, which is generated by user fees, he says.

— Camilla Mortensen

PHOTO RBRR



A child captures a bunny at the Cottage Grove animal scramble

CRUEL RABBIT ROUNDUP

Bunnies being dumped out of a trailer, a rabbit being flung through the air and rows of screaming children bearing down on a cluster of bunnies paralyzed with fear: Red Barn Rabbit Rescue documented this and more at the "animal scramble" at the July 13-14 Cottage Grove Rodeo (see our blog post July 16). Animal advocates are seeking to put an end to this annual event that they say is cruel and irresponsible.

Rabbits are hardy but fragile, Heather Crippen of RBRR says. Crippen says that animal scrambles, basically contests in which if a person can chase down one of the animals, he keeps it, traditionally used farm animals such as sheep, goats and pigs to give farmers a way of starting herds and later as a way of giving 4-H kids the opportunity to raise an animal. But at some point Crippen says the Cottage Grove Rodeo event, which is put on by the Cottage Grove Riding Club, became focused on pet rabbits.

Crippen and her daughter Alex run the area's only strictly rabbit rescue out of their home in Creswell. It currently houses about 50 or so rabbits, and Crippen says events such as the animal scramble lead to more rabbits in need of adoption as the kids come home with pets they don't know how to care for or their parents didn't approve. She says 81 percent of rabbits will be homeless in their lifetime.

Scott Beckstead of the Oregon Humane Society says that rabbits are the third most popular companion animal in the U.S., "Yet this event teaches children that they amount to little more than a throwaway prize." Beckstead, Crippen and others are looking into ways to end events like the animal scramble in Lane County.

Crippen is delighted the video her teenage daughter filmed, edited and posted on YouTube has created an outcry about the animal scramble. She says she tried to talk to the riding club about how cruel the event is to rabbits, but didn't get a reply. Crippen would like the riding club to research rabbits and learn how events like this affect the animals. "As an experienced rabbit person, I'm telling you that it's wrong," she says. She says stress is one of the leading causes of illness in rabbits.

Crippen points out that in the video the rabbits are in "fear paralysis" — frozen with their ears pointed forward — as they are dumped into the rodeo arena, where normally in open spaces they would frolic, and finally begin to flee when the children begin to grab them. She says that in the melee a rabbit could get injured by being grabbed by a leg, or the stress of the whole thing is enough to eventually kill a bunny, especially one in the hands of an inexperienced new owner.

Local animal advocates have started a petition against the event at wkly.ws/1bu and video can be seen at wkly.ws/1bv

For more on Red Barn Rabbit Rescue or to donate to the nonprofit, go to redbarnrabbitrescue.org

— Camilla Mortensen

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