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February 28, 2012

President Edward Ray
Oregon State University
600 Kerr Administration Building
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

Dear Dr. Ray,

We are pleased to learn through the OSU website and OSU's response to public concerns that the snares at the Sheep Center have been deactivated. Thank you for taking that responsible step in deference to your neighbors and public concern over the use of lethal and dangerous devices set by Wildlife Services.

We are contacting you regarding misinformation provided to the public on your website and in your response to public contact in reference to the placement of snare traps.

In communication sent from OSU in response to concerned members of the public, Mr. Rick Spinrad incorrectly states that "the federal predator control officers had previously placed snares inside no less than two layers of fencing and no closer to an OSU property boundary than about 100 feet."

This is incorrect according to homeowners who have found both wildlife and dogs caught in snares set along an exterior fence line, which is directly adjacent to and within 200 feet of their homes. Had the snares not been accessible to them and their pets, they would not have been aware of their presence, or found their pets caught in the snares. To our knowledge at least 2 dogs have been killed and several more found in the snares when their cries alerted their owners.

The OSU website (http://oregonstate.edu/ua/ncs/archives/2012/feb/snares-osu-sheep-barns-being-deactivated-other-predator-deterrents-enhanced) distinctly and incorrectly states that the snares were placed on interior fences. This is untrue since our information from homeowners who found their dogs caught in the snares along the exterior fence dates back to 2003. It is likely there are yet more incidents of a similar nature dating back to the time when OSU first contracted Wildlife Services. Please provide us with the contract and when it was first established.

The website and letters to the public also indicate that if an assessment of protection measures by internal OSU sources and Wildlife Services OSU finds it necessary, OSU will revert to using lethal control measures. We again are asking that an independent body investigate and assess the methods and efficiency of control methods used at the Sheep Center.

According to your website statement, last year with lethal methods in place, 'at least 12 lambs and ewes were killed in a night in a suspected coyote attack'. Clearly the use of the snares did not preclude losses or ensure protection for those animals. How exactly will the assessment you suggest determine that the snares are necessary or useful when depredation occurs in spite of their presence? That would require a control area to compare mortality and independent oversight of the experiment to ensure objective methodology and recording/reporting of the outcome of the study.

Finally, we suggest that before OSU considers returning the snares, which pose a danger to residents, that you take the obvious, safe and inexpensive steps to secure your exterior fences. Hang gates close to the ground, not twelve inches above it leaving the area accessible to animals. Install a simple hot wire around the bottom and top of the fence line, which works extremely well to keep wildlife and dogs away from the fence, as does the presence of guard animals. One of the homeowners whose dog was caught in your snares stated that her dog was frightened of and stayed away from the fence during a period of time when llamas patrolled the fence line.

OSU claims to be using non-lethal control methods such as mentioned above in the interior areas of the Sheep Farm. Now is the time to live up to your title of research school and do the right thing for the community, by expanding your use of non-lethal methods all the way to the exterior fencing.

We ask for your response to these issues and to our request for an independent body to assess methods for damage control at the Sheep Unit and for a copy of your contract with Wildlife Services.

Sincerely,

Brooks Fahy
Executive Director