



# Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003  
awionline.org phone: (202) 337-2332 fax: (202) 446-2131

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BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. William H. Clay  
Deputy Administrator  
USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 1624 South Agriculture Building  
Washington, DC 20250-3402  
Bill.Clay@aphis.usda.gov

Dear Deputy Administrator Clay:

We are writing to follow up on the pending investigation of Wildlife Services (WS) employee Jamie P. Olson. On November 1, 2012, the Animal Welfare Institute and Project Coyote submitted images depicting acts of cruelty to animals that Mr. Olson committed while employed by WS and asked that the program undertake an investigation. On November 13, you responded to our inquiry with a letter indicating that WS would complete a "thorough review" of Mr. Olson's actions. Since that time, we have not received any additional information concerning the investigation. Examining Mr. Olson's egregious acts should be a top priority for WS, as his behavior reflects on the program and its willingness to tolerate extreme cruelty to animals.

We have a broader concern that illegal behavior and shocking acts of animal abuse have emerged as patterns within WS. In June 2012, program employee Kyle Traweek, acting in violation of at least three EPA use restrictions, set an M-44 sodium cyanide device near a family home in Texas. The poisoned trap killed the family's beloved dog—yet WS ignored the situation, and went so far as to reset the M-44 repeatedly in the weeks following this incident. In January, WS trapper Russell Files intentionally trapped a neighbor's dog in El Mirage, Arizona with two steel leghold traps. The dog was severely injured, including twenty-two broken teeth, during her desperate struggle to escape, and was found covered in blood by her rescuers. Although Mr. Files set these traps while on duty, it is not clear whether he has been terminated—or even formally reprimanded—by WS. Like Mr. Olson, a number of WS employees have posted photographs of animals caught in traps on social networking websites, which show the employees harassing the animals and posing for photos rather than ending their suffering. These examples illustrate the lack of accountability and the tolerance for animal cruelty that appear to be plaguing WS.

We ask that you provide us with the results of WS' investigation of Mr. Olson or, alternatively, provide an update on the progress of the investigation if it is not yet complete. It is critical that you proceed with this investigation expeditiously, and terminate Mr. Olson's employment immediately if you conclude that he has engaged in unethical and inhumane practices.

As noted in our letter of November 1, photographs and comments posted on Mr. Olson's Facebook page and other online forums demonstrate that he has engaged in wanton cruelty toward animals by allowing his dogs to torment and harm trapped coyotes, failing to adhere to reasonable trap check times, and promoting killing competitions. This is unacceptable behavior for anyone, but such brutality is particularly alarming when demonstrated by a government employee tasked with responsibly managing wildlife. In addition, we would like to know the employment status of Mr. Files, and we would be interested in a report on any recent steps WS has taken to address our concerns about the inhumane and irresponsible behaviors of its employees.

We look forward to receiving your response to this inquiry by email at [cathy@awionline.org](mailto:cathy@awionline.org) and [cfox@projectcoyote.org](mailto:cfox@projectcoyote.org).

Sincerely,



Cathy Liss  
President  
Animal Welfare Institute



Camilla H. Fox  
Executive Director, Project Coyote  
Wildlife Consultant, Animal Welfare Institute

cc:

Tom Vilsack, Secretary, USDA ([tom.vilsack@usda.gov](mailto:tom.vilsack@usda.gov))

Kevin A. Shea, Acting Administrator, USDA-APHIS ([kevin.a.shea@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:kevin.a.shea@aphis.usda.gov))

Jeffrey S. Green, Western Regional Director, USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services  
([jeffrey.s.green@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:jeffrey.s.green@aphis.usda.gov))

Charles S. Brown, Eastern Regional Director, USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services  
([charles.s.brown@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:charles.s.brown@aphis.usda.gov))

Congressman Peter DeFazio  
Congressman John Campbell