



June 25, 2020

Dr. Kerry Mower
Wildlife Health Specialist
New Mexico Department of Game & Fish
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Santa Fe, NM 87507
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Dear Dr. Mower:

We write to you after receiving reports of the unacceptable use of strangulation as a form of so-called "euthanasia" by a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) officer in May 2020. We are appalled and extremely concerned about that particular case, but more so, we are alarmed that strangulation appears to be routine protocol for the Department. We strongly urge NMDGF to immediately cease use of this cruel killing method as a matter of internal policy, and to establish rules that explicitly prohibit strangulation as a method of killing wildlife.

Documents from a recent Inspection of Public Records Act request reveal that on May 1, 2020, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Officer Joseph Morales strangled a bobcat to death with a catchpole after it was captured in a live trap. While we certainly find the decision to kill rather than relocate the bobcat questionable, we are extremely disturbed by the method of killing.

The strangulation took place on the premises of Alamogordo Animal Control, a facility with staff licensed by the New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine (NMBVM) to perform humane euthanasia. Animal control officers had possession of the bobcat when Officer Morales arrived, and at least once they offered to humanely euthanize the previously sedated animal via injection. This offer (and possible additional offers) was rejected by multiple NMDGF employees—they stated that strangulation was the usual method of "euthanasia" of wildlife like bobcats, and one employee (Game & Fish Officer Corey Smith) even suggested that animal control officers themselves could use a catchpole to strangle the bobcat.

After learning about the details of the bobcat's sedation 1-2 hours beforehand and a report that the bobcat was seen struggling in the catchpole, we are immensely concerned

that the bobcat was possibly conscious and suffering while being strangled. If strangulation is indeed the routine practice by NMDGF officers, it's reasonable to assume that many other animals have suffered while conscious during strangulation.

Neither the American Veterinary Medicine Association nor the NMBVM consider strangulation to be a humane euthanasia method. We have consulted with veterinary experts who agree that NMDGF's employment of strangulation as a euthanasia method is unwarranted and egregious in any case, but especially when approved humane euthanasia methods are being offered by a licensed facility with licensed euthanasia technicians.

Animal Protection of New Mexico is concerned that this animal—and likely, many others—suffered needlessly, and we are requesting your and NMDGF's action and assurance this will not happen to another animal. We urge the NMDGF to cease this practice immediately, adopt an official policy prohibiting its use, and retrain personnel in order to prevent this from ever happening to another animal in our state.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alan Edmonds
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cc: NMDGF Director Michael Sloane
New Mexico State Game Commission