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Author

Darrow, Patrick A.

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The Pocatello Supply Depot: A History and Update

Patrick A. Darrow

USDA APHIS, Wildlife Services, Pocatello Supply Depot, Pocatello, Idaho

ABSTRACT: Since the Pocatello Supply Depot (PSD) was created in 1936, the PSD has gone through many transformation and organizational changes. The most recent of these changes occurred in 2014, when the PSD transitioned from a cooperative service agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Greater Pocatello Chamber of Commerce, to a fully federal facility within USDA. Despite the many organizational changes, the purpose of the PSD has remained the same. The PSD manufactures and provides specialized wildlife damage management materials and services that are not readily available from commercial sources, for use by USDA Wildlife Services (WS), other Federal and non-Federal government entities, and the public. The products produced and distributed by the PSD have changed over time to meet the needs of those managing wildlife damage. The PSD produces and/or distributes gas cartridges, zinc phosphide and strychnine grain baits, zinc phosphide concentrate, DRC-1339, synthetic fatty acid lures, Neutroleum Alpha deodorizer, M-44 capsules and components, sylvatic plague vaccine baits, and warning signs. Besides products that are distributed directly from the PSD, the PSD processes orders for other Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) products such as brodifacoum conservation rodenticide baits; diphacinone conservation rodenticide bait; acetaminophen tablets and acetaminophen mouse baits for brown treesnake control; GonaCon immunocontraceptive vaccines for deer and horses; and livestock protection collars. The PSD works closely with WS operations, the WS National Wildlife Research Center, and APHIS Environmental and Risk Analysis Service to maintain its products' pesticide registrations with the Environmental Protection Agency and state pesticide regulatory agencies.

KEY WORDS: baits, control, pest management, pesticides, rodenticides, wildlife management, USDA Wildlife Services

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HISTORY

The predecessor of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Wildlife Services (WS), Pocatello Supply Depot (PSD), was a cooperative bait mixing station operated by the USDA, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Biological Survey, and the University of Idaho's Idaho Agricultural Extension Service in McCammon, Idaho. Prior to 1925, the USGS Biological Survey's toxic rodent bait mixing was conducted on the job, in the various districts, using a wide variety of mixing methods [G. W. Kerr, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (USFWS) unpubl. report]. In an effort to create a more consistent and effective rodent bait, the Biological Survey had an interest in establishing a bait mixing station with the appropriate equipment to produce large quantities of consistent bait. An additional advantage of establishing a bait mixing station was the ability to combine orders for raw materials and decrease cost through bulk ordering. In 1926, the bait mixing station in McCammon was set up in a rented livery stable with equipment salvaged from an abandoned flour mill (H. Baetkey, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife unpubl. report, USDI and USFWS unpubl. report).

Because a large portion of the demand for bait from the McCammon mixing station was coming from outside of Idaho, the Idaho Agricultural Extension Service withdrew from the cooperative program in 1930. The Bannock County Farm Bureau in Idaho entered into an agreement with the Biological Survey and assumed the responsibilities of the Idaho Extension Service. This arrangement lasted until 1933, when the Bannock Farm Bureau was dissolved and the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce replaced the Bannock Farm Bureau as the cooperating agency for the operation of the mixing station (G. W. Kerr, unpubl. report, L. W. De Bates, USFWS unpubl. report).

By 1932, the McCammon mixing station could no longer keep up with the demand for toxic bait, which exceeded over 500,000 lbs of mixed bait and steam-crushed oats (Pocatello Tribune 1932). That year the Biological Survey began looking for a larger facility closer to shipping facilities, wholesale houses, and oat growing areas (Pocatello Tribune 1932, Zajanc 1970). To accommodate the increased demand for rodent baits, the USDA leased a warehouse in Pocatello, Idaho, from the Hardesty Manufacturing Company of Denver, Colorado (Paul T. Quick, Biological Survey unpubl. data). Paul Quick, the manager of the mixing plant, traveled to the USDA regional office in Portland, Oregon, to negotiate for additional bait manufacturing equipment to be installed at the Pocatello facility (Pocatello Tribune 1932).

In 1936, Congress authorized Game Management Supply Depots to be created and operated with federal funds (49 Stat 1913 16 U.S.C. 667). These funds were used in 1937, to purchase the Hardesty warehouse as well as additional, adjacent lots of land for an expansion of the mixing facility. A growing demand for rodent and predator control led to the construction of an addition to the plant in 1938, using Works Project Administration funds and labor. This larger building allowed the depot to expand into additional predator and rodent control products including 1,822,085 lbs of crushed oats, oat groats, and mixed baits; 75,300 rodent gas cartridges for fumigating burrows; 1,680,050 strychnine predator tablets; 560 strychnine porcupine blocks; 744 gopher traps; and 6,516 3N and 4N Victor traps (G. W. Kerr, unpubl. report).

A 1945, amendment to the cooperative agreement between the Biological Survey and the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce changed the name of the Bureau of Biological Survey, Supply Depot to the Pocatello Supply

Depot (H. Baetkey, unpubl. report). Over the years, supply depots were also operated in Amherst, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; Lafayette, Indiana; Mississippi State, Mississippi; Mitchell, South Dakota; Raleigh, North Carolina; and San Antonio, Texas [U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI), unpubl. report]. Following congressional approval of wildlife supply depots, a statement formalizing the objectives of the depots was issued. The original objectives of the depots were: 1) to distribute items that were not readily available from commercial sources; 2) to distribute items available from commercial sources where better prices could be obtained through the pooling of orders; 3) to accumulate and store surplus property useful to the USFWS but not immediately needed from other government agencies; and 4) to construct equipment of special design (USDI, unpubl. report). Additional objectives were later added to include: 5) to prepare and test, on an operational scale, experimental compounds that had been laboratory tested but were not commercially available; and 6) to provide reliable animal control materials in sufficient quantity for use by the Service and other agencies in order to effectively carry out their responsibilities in animal damage control (USDI, unpubl. report).

Historical Products and Sales

Over the years, the PSD manufactured poison grain baits with strychnine, compound 1080, zinc phosphide, thallium sulphate, and warfarin. Besides the grain baits, the PSD also stocked and sold poisons such as red squill, Compound 1080, thallium sulphate, warfarin compound, zinc phosphide, strychnine paste, strychnine alkaloid, strychnine and salt porcupine blocks, and other ingredients for poison bait (B. A. Hundley and H. Baetkey, unpubl. report). The depot also manufactured gas cartridges for rodent control, gas cartridges for predator denning, M-44 cyanide capsules and components, cyanide shells for coyote getters, strychnine poison tablets for predators, gopher probes, and rabbit repellents. The depot stocked and resold grain bait bags, rifle and shotgun ammunition, traps and trapping supplies, fur stretchers, coyote getters and coyote getter components, amyl nitrite for use with M-44 cyanide capsules, pyrotechnics for bird dispersal, warning signs, deodorizing products, and lure components (J. Bean, USFWS unpubl. data). In the late 1940's, the PSD also maintained five surplus military aircraft for use by the Division of Predator and Rodent Control (B. A. Hundley and H. Baetkey, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife unpubl. report).

Because the PSD is unique in its operations and products it sells, it receives requests from around the world for products. Historically the PSD provided strychnine bait and predator tablets to Canada, Argentina, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Peru, Columbia, and Mexico (R. K. Hart, Hart and Manwaring unpubl. reports). More recently the PSD has provided products to Australia, Israel, Mauritius, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Federalization

By 1980, the PSD was the last depot in operation. An explanation of the operation of the PSD from 1940 through 2014 is provided by Packham (Packham 1992). Briefly,

the PSD largely operated as a quasi-private, not-for-profit, self-sustaining entity without receiving government appropriations. Day-to-day management of operations was provided by a federal manager with most other employees being employees of the depot. Money received from the sale of products was held in a private fund with supervision of expenditure of funds provided by the Pocatello City Chamber of Commerce. The cost of salaries, raw materials, equipment, and overhead was paid from revenue received from the sales of products (Packham 1992).

In 2009, USDA determined the PSD was a federal entity and should comply with all federal administrative requirements rather than operating as a quasi-private entity. The cooperative agreement with the Pocatello City Chamber of Commerce was allowed to expire in 2010, and in 2014, the PSD became a fully federal entity operated solely by USDA WS. Prior to the becoming a fully federalized operation, supervision of the depot operations was provided by the Idaho WS Program. Following federalization, the PSD became its own program within WS with supervision by the WS Administrator's Office. As part of the federalization, employees of the PSD were laid off and were required to reapply for positions as federal employees. Five employees currently work at the PSD: three materials handlers, a budget analyst, and the manager. During the transition, the PSD transferred all PSD operating money from the private fund held at a local bank to the United States Treasury. Despite a number of changes to the operation of the PSD following the transition to a fully federal facility, the PSD continues to operate as a largely, self-sustaining program with limited appropriated money. The PSD now follows all federal regulations regarding human resource management, financial management, procurement and purchasing, sales and inventory management, property and facility management, and information technology.

PSD Products

The PSD maintains pesticide dealer licenses in the needed states for its EPA registered pesticides. The products currently manufactured or repackaged at the PSD include: rodent gas cartridges, denning gas cartridges, M-44 devices, M-44 parts and M-44 cyanide capsules, strychnine grain baits, zinc phosphide grain baits, Mesurol (an aversive conditioning pesticide for eggs), zinc phosphide concentrate rodenticide, DRC-1339 avicide, fatty acid scent and DRC-6220 synthetic monkey pheromone scents, predator survey disks, WS warning signs, break-away snare locks, sylvatic plague vaccine baits for prairie dogs (*Cynomys* spp.), and neutrolem alpha deodorizing concentrate. Until 2019, the PSD also sold two Food and Drug Administration-regulated Investigational Animal Drugs, propiopromazine hydrochloride for use in a trap tranquilizer device, and alpha chloralose, a bird immobilizing agent. Sales volumes of PSD products vary from year to year, but gas cartridges consistently make up ~40% of the PSD sales. Similarly, proportions of sales of other products remain relatively consistent from year to year (Table 1). Approximately 20-25% of the PSD sales are to WS with the remainder of sales to other Federal and non-Federal government entities, and the public.

Table 1. Sales volume of the main products sold by the United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, Pocatello Supply Depot in Fiscal Year 2019 (October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019).

Product	Volume and Unit Sold	
Non-Restricted Use Materials		
Lures		
Fatty Acid Scent (FAS)	64	Ounces
Synthetic Monkey Pheromone	32	Ounces
Genuine Catnip Oil	16	Ounces
Predator Survey Disks	16,080	Each
Neutroleum Alpha Deodorizer	1,136	Each
Break-away Snare Locks	400	Each
Trap Scales	8	Each
General Use Pesticides		
Rodent Gas Cartridges		
#56228-2 APHIS-Only Gas Cartridge	5,000	Each
#56228-61 Gas Cartridge	159,450	Each
Denning Cartridges		
#56228-21 APHIS-Only Large Gas Cartridge	525	Each
#56228-62 Large Gas Cartridge	4,150	Each
Strychnine Grain Baits		
#56228-19 Strychnine Milo-Hand Baiting	2,600	Pounds
#56228-20 Strychnine Oats-Hand Baiting	4,735	Pounds
GonaCon		
#56228-41 GonaCon-Equine	560	Milliliters
Acetaminophen Tablets		
#56228-35 Acetaminophen for Brown Treesnake Control	141,746	Each
Restricted Use Pesticides		
Strychnine Grain Baits		
#56228-11 Strychnine Milo-Burrow Builder	3,410	Pounds
#56228-12 Strychnine Oats-Burrow Builder	3,150	Pounds
Zinc Phosphide		
#56228-3 Zinc Phosphide on Wheat	42,285	Pounds
#56228-14 Zinc Phosphide on Oats	20,990	Pounds
#56228-6 Zinc Phosphide Concentrate	1,461	Pounds
M-44 Components		
#56228-15 Cyanide Capsules	15,350	Each
#39508-1 Cyanide Capsules	50	Each
#13808-8 Cyanide Capsules	250	Each
#35978-1 Cyanide Capsules	1,000	Each
#33858-2 Cyanide Capsules	2,925	Each
#35975-2 Cyanide Capsules	50	Each
Ejectors	1,567	Each
Stakes	1,447	Each
Capsule Holders	3,763	Each
DRC-1339		
#56228-29 Compound DRC-1339 Concentrate-Livestock, Nest & Fodder Depredation	1,024	Grams
#56228-63 Compound DRC-1339 Concentrate-Bird Control	20,975	Grams
GonaCon		
#56228-40 GonaCon – Deer	100	Milliliters
Sylvatic Plague Vaccine Baits	216,000	Each

Besides the products manufactured at the PSD, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) maintains registrations for pesticides that are manufactured by companies or facilities other than the PSD. The PSD processes the order paperwork for these APHIS pesticides. APHIS has island conservation registrations for brodifacoum and diphacinone baits for rodent eradication; 1080 livestock protection collars; GonaCon immuno-contraceptives for horses (*Equus caballus*), burros (*E. asinus*), and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*); and acetaminophen tablets and acetaminophen neonatal mouse baits for brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*) control.

PSD Collaboration

The PSD works closely with WS operations, the WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), and APHIS Environmental and Risk Analysis Service (ERAS) to maintain its products' pesticide registrations with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state pesticide regulatory agencies. WS state programs determine which PSD products to register in their respective states and the NWRC, ERAS, and PSD assist the WS state programs with registering pesticides with each individual states' pesticide regulatory agencies. The NWRC, ERAS, and PSD also ensure pesticide label language is compliant with EPA label requirements,

perform QC tests on materials, conduct research to support product registration, and developing new products. The PSD also works with the APHIS Financial Management Division to set pricing to ensure full cost recovery of direct and indirect costs for the production and repacking of its products.

The PSD regularly fields questions from both WS and the public regarding wildlife damage management tools or issues. Besides the sale of products, the employees of the PSD try to be a source of information for those experiencing wildlife damage. As the manufacturing arm of WS and the only facility of its kind, the PSD continually looks to improve the quality of its products and will continue to sell products proven to reduce wildlife damage. The PSD will also continue to look at opportunities to offer new products that will assist with emerging issues in wildlife damage management.

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