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Dog Owned By NorCal Rat Poison Researcher Is Poisoned To Death

BLUE LAKE, Humboldt County (CBS SF) – A dog owned by a Northern California researcher studying how a rat poison affects endangered species was killed by the same poison intentionally left for the dog, according to the owner.

Nyxo, a 10-year-old labrador mix, belonged to Dr. Mourad Gabriel, who has been investigating how the poison brodifacoum threatens wildlife such as northern spotted owls.

On February 3rd, Nyxo began having seizures and vomited chunks of red meat after coming in from outside the night before, Gabriel told the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office.

A necropsy at UC Davis revealed that the dog had ingested red meat laced with brodifacoum.

The sheriff's office said it's believed whoever did it specifically targeted the dog and the house, according to the Eureka Times-Standard.

Nyxo died after ingesting rat poison, according to a necropsy. (Mourad Gabriel)

"We are attempting to find out if any other dogs in that area of Blue Lake have been poisoned," Lt. Steve Knight told the Times-Standard. "Deputies and detectives have been going around to houses in the neighborhood, and no other dogs have been poisoned."

A conservation group, the Center for Biological Diversity is offering a $2,500 reward for information about the fatal poisoning. In a press release, the center's toxics and endangered species campaign director Jonathan Evans said, "The evidence strongly suggests that this malicious poisoning is tied to Dr. Gabriel's research and if that is true we condemn the use of violence to silence any scientist, researcher or citizen whose work aims to conserve wildlife."

Brodifacoum, an anti-coagulant that causes internal hemorrhaging, can be found in products such as d-Con rat poison and is widely available in other forms online.

“Any animal or human that ingests this poison will experience a very cruel death,” Knight told the Time-Standard.

California and the Environmental Protection Agency have worked to ban brodifacoum products because of secondary poisonings of pets and wildlife.