

2016-05

SUPPORT FOR DNR BAN OF LEAD SHOT ON WMA'S IN MINNESOTA'S FARMLAND ZONE

BACKGROUND:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is considering a proposal that would require hunters to use non-toxic shot for small game on wildlife management areas in the farmland zone. The goal is to reduce the amount of toxic lead shot deposited on public hunting lands, especially near wetlands where waterfowl may ingest the shot. The farmland zone contains 400,000 acres of state hunting lands or about 31 percent of the wildlife management area land in Minnesota.

Lead shot is highly toxic to wildlife and persists in the environment for a long time. It causes damage to the nerves and organs resulting in emaciation, paralysis, and vulnerability to predators, reproductive impairment, and at toxic levels, a slow painful death. Lead is also a danger to human health and reproduction with unborn babies and young children being the most vulnerable.

Lead shot that falls on land or in the water is often picked up by birds for grit, or is consumed by predators and scavengers when feeding on prey that contain lead pellets or bullet fragments. The ingestion of only a few pellets can be fatal to birds and animals. Over 100 species of birds are known to have been killed by ingesting lead shot. In acidic or basic soil and water conditions lead can also be absorbed by plants and incorporated into food items.

The use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting on all lands has been illegal in Minnesota since 1987 and nationally since 1991. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has required non-toxic shot on waterfowl production areas and national wildlife refuges for all small game hunting since 1999. Since there is a mix of state and federal hunting lands in the farmland zone of Minnesota, requiring non-toxic shot on all public lands would simplify regulations and reduce the likelihood of hunters carrying both kinds of shot and mistakenly using the wrong shot. At least 26 other states, including the neighboring states of South Dakota and Iowa, have instituted restrictions on the use of lead for small game hunting.

Non-toxic shotgun shells are widely available and are not cost prohibitive. A typical pheasant hunter will use about two boxes of shells per season. The difference in cost is as little as \$1.50 per box or a few dollars at most.

Lead is highly toxic and should not be left on the landscape. Hunters should be concerned about any unnecessary suffering or loss of wildlife. A ban of lead shot will protect wildlife and provide a safer environment on public lands.

Banning lead will also help to preserve our hunting heritage. Hunters can improve their image by supporting a ban on lead shot. It would demonstrate to the public that hunters have a conservation ethic and are willing to suffer some extra cost and inconvenience to do the right thing to safeguard the health of our public lands. Minnesota was a leader in banning lead shot for waterfowl hunting prior to the federal government, and should also set the example for small game hunting.

RESOLVE:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RSOLVED: that the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America, on April 24, 2016, supports the DNR's proposal for a rule to ban the use of lead shot for small game hunting in the farmland zone of Minnesota.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that the Minnesota Division supports a ban of lead shot for small game hunting on all lands in Minnesota, as well as a ban on the use of lead bullets in high-powered rifles for hunting big game in Minnesota, and encourages the DNR to propose such a rule in the future.

Submitted by the W. J. McCabe Chapter