

Why Blanket Lead Ammunition Bans Are NOT Good Policy

State and federal governments are being pressured to implement bans on the use of lead ammunition in hunting. **Safari Club International opposes blanket prohibitions on lead ammo.** Bans provide limited benefits, while reducing hunter participation and conservation funding.

- *Lower Recruitment.* New, novice, youth, and rural hunters are disproportionately impacted by lead ammo restrictions. New and youth hunters often start with small game, smaller calibers, and lighter guns, for which fewer non-lead alternatives exist.
- *Lower Conservation Funding.* Fewer hunters means **diminished dollars from reduced license sales and matching funds from federal excise taxes on hunting equipment and ammunition.** These Wildlife Restoration Fund dollars are the primary source of state conservation budgets.
- *No Viable Alternative Ammo.* Non-lead ammunition is often hard to find, and many firearms have no viable non-lead alternative ammo available, including .22 long rifles (often used in small game hunting), air guns, muzzleloaders, older models, and rare calibers. **Many hunters will be forced to purchase not only new ammunition, but new firearms.**
- *Loss of Hunter Access.* Alternative ammunition is also not available in the quantities needed to support hunters. Nor will it become available. Manufacturers cannot easily switch from lead to copper, as the manufacturing processes and market forces are entirely different. **Non-lead ammo is already significantly more expensive and more difficult to find, especially for rural hunters. Greater expense and less availability will force hunters to stop hunting.**
- *Wildlife Management Impact.* Hunting is the primary management tool for abundant species like deer and black bear. Less hunting results in less effective wildlife management.
- *Limited Species at Risk.* Lead exposure does not impact species uniformly. While research indicates negative effects from lead exposure on scavenger birds, it does not reflect negative impacts on mammal species, even scavenger mammals.
- *No Population Declines.* Research on eagles and waterfowl has produced consistent results: lead exposure can slow population growth rates but **has not caused population declines.** The California condor is the only wild species where research suggests negative population impacts due to lead exposure, but current regulations already restrict use of lead ammo in condor range.
- *No Link from Lead Ammo to Human Health Issues.* The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not classify use of lead ammo in hunting as a health risk. No studies link the use of lead ammo in hunting or the consumption of lead in game meat with illness in humans. The CDC makes no mention of lead in game meat on their website dedicated to lead and human health issues.
- *Ammo Is Not Paint.* Lead is used commercially in several forms. The form in ammunition is **not** the same, and is less easily absorbed into the bloodstream, than the form in paint or gasoline. Exposure to lead ammo, even by consuming small fragments in game meat, has **not** been shown to cause chronic lead poisoning. At most, exposure causes periodic spikes in blood lead levels—**which are still lower than CDC levels of concern.**
- *Blanket Lead Ammo Bans Are Not the Answer.* An advisory council to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently **rejected a mandatory lead ban** on federal refuges, and prioritized voluntary, incentive-based programs to generate hunter buy-in and avoid the loss of hunter participation.
- *Alternative Policy Choices Exist.* Hunter choice is key, because lead alternative ammo is not suited for every gun or hunting opportunity. Where lead ammo is permitted, regulators have other options to reduce the potential exposure of scavenging birds to lead, such as requiring hunters carry out or bury/scatter gut piles, subsidizing non-lead ammo or bonded lead bullets, educational efforts and more.