



Position Statement on Lead-based Ammunition and Fishing Tackle

We recognize that lead is a potent toxin to humans and wildlife that can have individual-and population-level effects. Therefore, we support the replacement of lead-based sporting ammunition and fishing tackle with non-lead alternatives whenever possible.

Lead is a toxic metal, yet tons of lead are deposited into our environment annually through hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting. Lead deposited in the environment will persist indefinitely and will not break down over time into less-toxic compounds. Mortality due to lead poisoning has been documented in humans, birds, and a variety of other wildlife for over 2,000 yrs. Lead toxicity can also have sub-lethal consequences that can compromise both survival and reproductive success in a wide variety of species.

In the early 90s, concern grew that millions of waterfowl were dying each year from lead poisoning in North America. After years of debate, the federal government finally enacted a ban on the use of lead shot for most waterfowl hunting, however it has remained legal for many other species. Lead is also often being ingested by waterfowl mistaking fishing tackle for grit or by raptors (like eagles or osprey) and other wildlife when they prey upon wounded animals that have been shot or eat fish that have ingested lead tackle, or when they scavenge fish or game offal. Lead remains a primary cause of death in bald eagles and loons.

What can you do to help? Suspected cases of lead poisoning in wildlife should be reported to a local licensed wildlife rehabilitator, such as CROW (239-472-3644) , or to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (www.myfwc.com). Advocate the use fishing sinkers and jigs made from nontoxic materials such as tin, bismuth, stainless steel, ceramic, and tungsten-nickel alloy. Encourage the use of nontoxic rifle and shotgun ammunition. Nontoxic ammunition is increasingly available online and at many locations where lead ammunition is sold. Ask your local bait and tackle shop and your ammunition dealer to carry a variety of non-lead products if they don't already carry them. Non-lead ammunition outperforms lead in many cases and has become increasingly affordable.

We encourage and participate in research aimed at understanding the extent of the problem of lead poisoning in humans, the environment, and wildlife in Southwest Florida. We also supports educational efforts to promote greater public awareness and understanding of the consequences of lead exposure to human wildlife populations, and to emphasize the potential gains for wildlife and environmental quality from use of nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle.

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