

## Veterinary Support for Use of Non-Lead Ammunition

**Please return this endorsement form by April 15, 2015**

We, the undersigned veterinarians, recognize the overwhelming scientific evidence regarding the toxic effects of lead—even at very low exposure levels—on avian and other wildlife species. The veterinary community has seen the serious effects of lead firsthand, while diagnosing and treating animals suffering from lead poisoning. **In light of this evidence and professional experience, we support policy reform that phases out the use of lead ammunition in hunting and other forms of wildlife shooting, including depredation, control killing, and nongame shooting, in order to safeguard animal, human and environmental health.**

Lead is toxic to vertebrate physiological systems, including the central and peripheral nervous, renal, cardiovascular, reproductive, immune and hematologic systems, and it is recognized as a carcinogen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Lead poisoning can cause an inability to fly in birds, and starvation, weakness, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, anemia, blindness, seizures and death in birds and other species.

In addition to the direct negative health impacts of lead on avian and other wildlife species, there are also severe health consequences from secondary poisoning of other animals, including wild scavenging species such as eagles and other raptors, ravens, turkey vultures and companion animals such as dogs and cats—all of whom may ingest lead-poisoned animal carcasses.

Diagnosing and treating lead toxicity in wild birds and mammals can be expensive and time-intensive. Because most lead-poisoned animals are not privately owned, non-profit wildlife rehabilitation centers and charitable organizations bear the primary burden of these costs of care for animals who are brought to them.

Lead-based ammunition is now the greatest largely-unregulated source of lead intentionally discharged into the environment. Many other significant sources of environmental lead, such as leaded gasoline and lead-based paints, were recognized as harmful long ago and have been significantly reduced or eliminated.

Alternatives to lead ammunition, such as steel, bismuth and copper, are available and perform as well if not better than lead ammunition. With increased demand following the 1991 federal ban on lead ammunition for waterfowl hunting and additional requirements later enacted in 34 states including a complete phase-out in California by 2019, non-lead ammunition availability and price have improved.

- In October 2012, a position statement issued by the Association of Avian Veterinarians stated that:  
*AAV recognizes that lead is a potent toxin to wild birds that can have individual- and population-level effects. Therefore, the AAV advocates the replacement of lead-based sporting ammunition and fishing tackle with non-lead-based alternatives.*
- In 2013, a scientist consensus statement signed by 30 leading researchers and health professionals from around the world was published by the University of California. Titled “*Health Risks from Lead-Based Ammunition in the Environment*,” this consensus statement received support from a wide variety of expert signatories including neurologists, pediatricians, toxicologists, conservation biologists, wildlife researchers, public health specialists and veterinarians. The statement reads in part:  
*Based on overwhelming evidence for the toxic effects of lead in humans and wildlife, even at very low exposure levels, convincing data that the discharge of lead-based ammunition into the environment poses significant risks of lead exposure to humans and wildlife, and the availability of non-lead alternative products for hunting, we support reducing and eventually eliminating the introduction of lead into the environment from lead-based ammunition.*

For the reasons identified above, we support policy reform that requires the reduction and eventual elimination of lead from ammunition used to take wildlife. This action is necessary in order to ensure that avian and other wildlife species are protected from the risk of lead exposure from spent hunting ammunition.

**To support the use of non-lead ammunition in hunting and other forms of wildlife shooting, please sign and return by April 15, 2015:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Title(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to HSVMA by April 15, 2015 via any of the following contacts:**

Email: [advocacy@hsvma.org](mailto:advocacy@hsvma.org) • Fax: (530) 759-8116