

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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Minimizing Risks to Wildlife and People from Lead Hunting Ammunition Progress Report April 2023

Since release of the [Minimizing Risks to Wildlife and People from Lead Hunting Ammunition](#) report in April 2022, DEC and partners have taken several steps to implement recommendations in the plan to minimize the risks associated with lead ammunition for hunting.

The recommendations in the report were centered around four main themes:

- *Outreach* - advance strategic educational outreach to increase public understanding of the potential and realized impacts of lead hunting ammunition on wildlife and people and encourage hunters to use non-lead alternatives;
- *Minimization* - develop and disseminate best management practices to hunters, deer processors, and food pantries to minimize the presence of lead on the landscape and in game meat consumed by people;
- *Supply* - work to increase supply, availability, and use of non-lead hunting ammunition;
- *Research* - conduct research to further understand the scope and extent of impacts of lead hunting ammunition on people and wildlife.

Some high priority recommendations from the report either underway or completed include:

- DEC initiated a study with the New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Cornell University, United States Geological Survey, and Conservation Science Global. Research partners will provide rebates to hunters to use non-lead ammunition while measuring ammunition use, hunting effort, and eagle mortalities in the study area to determine the usage rates at which eagle mortality is reduced.
- DEC's Wildlife Health Program is measuring lead levels in furbearers and other scavenging wildlife to evaluate lead exposure. Preliminary results show 36 (44%) of 81 sampled fishers had low but detectable lead levels, and 8 (15%) of 53 bobcats analyzed had detectable lead; data analyses and additional sample procurement is underway.
- DEC hosted a North American Non-Lead Partnership workshop for Hunter Education staff, leaders of New York hunting organizations, and outdoor writers to demonstrate differences in lead and non-lead bullet performance. Work is underway to provide widespread access to these online educational videos and other outreach materials.
- DEC has posted an educational video produced with Cornell Wildlife Health Lab and Cornell Department of Communication titled: "[Your Choice of Ammunition](#)" featuring hunter's experience with non-lead ammunition on the DEC YouTube Channel and hunting page, including updated messaging in the annual hunting guide to the benefits of using non-lead ammunition.
- DEC has updated our Hunter Education Program course curriculum and training of instructors to emphasize the risks to wildlife from lead ammunition and the benefits of non-lead ammunition.
- Department of Health (DOH) surveyed food banks on practices related to donation of wild game. DOH also updated their data collection procedures for lead-impacted adults



to include questions about game consumption and lead ammunition use. DOH continues to develop and update outreach materials for pantry/foodbank employees and patrons and provides "[Health Advice for Harvesting, Preparing, and Eating Wild Game](#)".

Much of this initial focus has been directed towards information and education and increasing our knowledge of wildlife exposure to lead. There is more to be done to increase hunter awareness.

In 2023, DEC will:

- Revamp and update our web information related to use of non-lead ammunition and provide more extensive access to existing sources of quality information about the topic.
- Begin work on a DEC video/demo with key messages about the benefits to hunters, wildlife, and consumers of game meat of using non-lead ammunition for hunting.
- Increase staff capacity to do educational demonstrations to hunters and others.
- Develop BMPs to reduce lead exposure to people and wildlife when lead-based bullets are used to harvest game through improved meat processing techniques and strategies to prevent scavenger access to offal and carcass remains.
- Work with the Division of Law Enforcement to promote and increase use of non-lead ammunition when responding to sick or injured wildlife.
- Future work will pursue establishment of an incentive-based program (rebates, reduced price coupons, etc.) to encourage hunters to try alternative hunting bullets. We remain convinced, once they do, they will continue to use them. Funding to secure access and incentive to try non-lead ammunition is essential, as is working in partnership with retailers and distributors of these products.



CHOOSE NON-LEAD AMMUNITION

CHOOSE PERFORMANCE: Non-lead ammunition expands rapidly and retains weight for a quick, humane kill.

CHOOSE HIGH-QUALITY MEAT: By using non-lead ammunition, you're ensuring healthier food for you and your family.

CHOOSE YOUR CONSERVATION LEGACY: Eagles and other scavengers ingest lead when feeding on carcasses and gut piles, causing some to become sick or die.

Choose non-lead to protect wildlife, your family, and hunters' conservation legacy.

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Lead bullets fragment; non-lead bullets don't.

Sample "advertisement" from the *Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide*