



Lead Industries Association, Inc.

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December 14, 1972

SUBJECT: THREAT TO USE OF LEAD SHOT
IN WATERFOWLING

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION, INC.:

As you probably know, a special Committee was formed earlier this year from among the Membership to monitor and attempt to deal with the National Wildlife Federation's concerted efforts to outlaw the use of lead shot for migratory waterfowl hunting. This Committee has met several times, and has been kept abreast of actions by the Department of Interior (Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife) with respect to lead shot. The Bureau's major activity has been the initiation of a test program to compare the effect of using experimental soft iron shot instead of lead at seven Federal Game Refuges.

Now some officials in the State of Maryland have apparently decided not to wait for results from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries tests, and are conducting hearings on a proposed bill that would effectively ban all waterfowl hunting with lead shot. One such hearing was held December 6, 1972, at the Queen Annes County High School, Centreville, Maryland, and LIA was represented.

James B. Coulter, Director, Department of Natural Resources for Maryland, opened the meeting with the announcement that he would push for enactment of this regulation posthaste, and set the tone for all that followed.

The Association is preparing publicity to counteract releases already made by the Wildlife Federation blaming lead shot for massive waterfowl kills in the State of Maryland. In addition, we have called for another meeting of the Committee on January 16, 1973, to decide our next course of action. We solicit your comments and suggestions regarding this matter and invite your participation in future meetings. Please let us hear from you.

Yours very truly,

CORNELIUS A. BAKER, JR.

CAB:lp
Encl.

LEAD POISONING OF WATERFOWL --
BACKGROUND AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES

MAGNITUDE OF KILL. The greatest bulk of the work done in detecting and diagnosing was performed by Mr. Frank Bellrose starting in 1939. Then a biologist at the University of Illinois, Mr. Bellrose was commissioned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to discover why hundreds of migratory waterfowl were dying, apparently of starvation in the midst of a surplus grain harvest year. Subsequently, upon laboratory tests of specimens Mr. Bellrose found birds dead and dying of lead poisoning, pellets from shot shells having been ingested from the bottoms of marshes by feeding birds. The shot is ground up in the birds' crop and enters the bloodstream and tissue where classic lead poisoning occurs. After World War II the work was restarted and sporadically supplemented until the 1960's. At the Maryland meeting, however, Mr. Bellrose would not estimate the numbers of birds poisoned each year, but simply deduced that based on his studies, the problem was a major one. While not denying that waterfowl die of lead poisoning, we believe that this scope study is badly in need of updating and have so suggested to the Federal Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. This Bureau has promised to consider seriously.

SUBSTITUTE SHOT. No manufacturer to date has stated when, if ever, iron shot, which holds the most promise, will be commercially available. While Winchester/Olin is continuing extensive and elaborate test programs they have made no statement to date as to expectation of commercial availability. The director of that program said in the Washington meeting in July that "the laws of physics have been exhausted". Ballistically, these companies agree, iron shot could possibly cause crippling losses equal to those due to lead poisoning. Also, the gun damage caused by iron is still unresolved and the manufacturers take the stand that they will not be responsible for this damage, nor any resulting physical injury to hunters. We believe that this is another area of vulnerability and should be exploited.

SPONSORS OF THE CAMPAIGN. The leader is clearly The National Wildlife Federation, Washington, DC. While the Federation claims a membership of three million sportsmen, hunters, and local conservation groups, we are not convinced that the rank and file membership subscribes to the campaign to eliminate lead shot. After talking to dozens of hunters in the Refuge test areas, and based on vigorous protests by hunters at the Maryland meeting, we believe that NWF may be suppressing dissension within their own organization. This, too, could be exploited.