Lead Industries Association, Inc.
292 Madison Avenue • New York, N. Y. 10017 • Telephone: (212) 679-8020

August 15, 1973

TO: LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP

Gentlemen:

When unsupported charges about the adverse health effects of lead are repeated often enough, they tend to be treated as gospel by the news media. To counter this tendency, LIA has made it a policy to respond instantly to major errors or misstatements that appear in the press with letters to the editors.

Two examples of this on-going LIA activity are enclosed.

One was in response to a New York Times editorial which called for an instant ban on the use of lead shot in waterfowl hunting as a means of protecting water birds from lead poisoning, despite the fact that too little is known about this subject.

The other took issue with an otherwise well-reasoned article in the August issue of Fortune, on the auto emission question which treated the lead in gasoline issue as a health problem.

We believe that "keeping the record straight" is an important function in a time when lead is subjected to so many attacks based on exaggerated suppositions about the health effects of the metal.

Sincerely,

Philip E. Robinson
Executive Vice President

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THE NEW YORK TIMES July 19, 1973

Iron Shot vs. Lead Shot: Unresolved Questions

To the Editor:

Your July 5 editorial "Lead Shot, Steel Trap" tends to oversimplify a situation concerning the use of lead shot in waterfowl hunting which many knowledgeable people think is not quite so simple as it might seem.

Indeed, this may be why the Department of the Interior—far from dragging its feet—continues to weigh carefully the various alternatives, including the substitution of iron shot.

Not only is there indication of damage to gun barrels and other malfunctions with the use of iron shot, there is serious concern that the crippling rate among waterfowl will be significantly increased. It is our understanding that tests are now being conducted concerning this latter point.

While we cannot argue the figures used in your editorial because we do not know of any conclusive data that either confirm or deny them, it is interesting to note that some Maryland officials reported last year that 5,000 to 6,000 waterfowl died of lead poisoning in that state. Subsequently, a member of the state's Natural Resources Department reported that these deaths were from all causes, and seemingly had been based on the examination of only 25 ducks and 34 geese.

Even the most ardent advocates of banning lead shot in waterfowl hunting concede that there are other causes for mortality among birds. Among them are the water levels and habitat of their feeding grounds. Man-made as well as natural changes in the environment have restricted the total areas of these feeding grounds.

We do not question that if waterfowl ingest enough lead, poisoning will occur in the course of time. We do question whether each year 3 to 4 per cent of the nation's waterfowl die solely from this cause, and we are seriously concerned that substitutes such as iron shot may well increase very significantly the mortality rates among waterfowl, perhaps well beyond the current ones.

PHILIP E. ROBINSON
Executive Vice President
Lead Industries Association
New York, July 10, 1973

FORTUNE August 1973

To the Editors:

The article presents a cogent picture of the tangle of problems involved in reducing auto emissions. But the author errs when he dismisses the lead-in-gasoline question with the curt statement: ". . . evidence indicates that airborne lead particulates can be harmful to health so there is good reason for reducing the amount of lead in gasoline . . ."

To the contrary, major scientific studies on the subject indicate the amount of lead emitted from automobile exhausts poses no health risk to the general public.

For example, the recent "Seven Cities Study," which was co-sponsored by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, shows no relationship between the amount of lead in the air and the lead in the blood of more than 2,000 individuals living in major urban areas. Measurement of the amount of lead in the blood is the accepted means of determining the possibility of adverse health effects.

If lead is removed from gasoline, the result will be a 5 to 8 percent penalty in crude oil at the refinery. By 1983, this can mean that the nation will need to import some 400 million additional barrels of crude oil each year. The removal of lead from gasoline would only serve to intensify the energy crisis, worsen our balance of payments position and create economic hardship for the users and makers of leaded gasolines.

PHILIP E. ROBINSON
Executive Vice President
Lead Industries Association
New York City