



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2015/0120,

Lead Shot Ammunition

This debate pack has been compiled ahead of the debate on lead shot ammunition to be held in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 8 December 2015 at 4.30-5.30pm. The Member in charge of the debate is Gerald Jones MP. The Library subject specialist is Dr Elena Ares.

>

Dr Elena Ares
Jacqueline Baker

Contents

1. Library summary:	
Lead Shot	2
1.1 UK regulation of lead shot	2
1.2 The Lead Ammunition Group	3
1.3 Calls for a ban of lead shot	4
2. News Articles	5
3. Press Releases	6
4. Parliamentary Material	8
4.1 Debate	8
4.2 Parliamentary Questions:	8
5. Useful links and further reading	10

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Library summary: Lead Shot

The use of lead shot has adverse environmental impacts on birds, particularly on wetland bird species. Birds such as gamebirds and wildfowl ingest spent lead gunshot mistakenly for food or the grit that helps them to grind up food in their muscular gizzards. Ingestion of lead gunshot by waterfowl is associated with [increased death rates](#). As a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds ([AEWA](#)) the UK agreed to phase out the use of lead shot in wetlands.

1.1 UK regulation of lead shot

As this is a devolved issue, it is regulated separately in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

- [The Environmental Protection \(Restriction on Use of Lead Shot\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#). The regulations restrict the use of lead shot over the foreshore and over specified Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It also completely bans its use when shooting ducks, geese, moorhens and coots.
- [The Environmental Protection \(Restriction on Use of Lead Shot\) \(Scotland\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2004](#). The regulations prohibit the use of lead shot over any wetland, but does not extend the ban to any waterfowl outside this area. The legislation uses the definition of wetland used in the [Ramsar Convention](#):

For the purposes of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peat and or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.

- [The Environmental Protection \(Restriction on Use of Lead Shot\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2002](#). Similar to English regulations.
- [The Environmental Protection \(Restriction on Use of Lead Shot\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2009](#). Similar to Scottish regulations.

Despite the regulation, concerns being expressed by scientist that the legislation is not being complied with and that the potential adverse health effects on humans that consume game shot with lead has been underestimated. These concerns were set out in a consensus statement by scientists in 2014 on [Wildlife and Human Health Risks from Lead-Based Ammunition in Europe](#). Further evidence was presented at a symposium held in Oxford on [Lead ammunition: understanding and minimising the risks to human and environmental health](#) on 10 December 2015. This included details of the [number of birds potentially affected](#):

Broad estimates indicate that in the UK in the order of 50,000-100,000 wildfowl (c. 1.5-3.0% of the wintering population) are likely to die each winter (i.e. during the shooting season) as a direct result of lead poisoning. For migratory swans, this represents a quarter of all recorded deaths. Wildfowl that die outside of the shooting season will be additional, as will those that die of causes exacerbated by lead poisoning.

1.2 The Lead Ammunition Group

A [Lead Ammunition Group](#) was set up in 2010 at the invitation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) invited strategic group to advise Government on the impacts of lead ammunition on wildlife and human health. The group included a range of stakeholders, including the Countryside Alliance and the RSPB, although Executive Chairman of the Countryside Alliance [resigned](#) from the Group in protest at what he called “abuses of process and evidence”, shortly before it submitted its report to DEFRA and FSA in June 2015.

The report has not yet being published but according to [the letter submitting it to the Government](#) it concludes that “that it is a matter of political judgment whether the actual and potential risks to wildlife and human health described in the report and associated risk assessments merit further mitigation efforts”. The letter also set out a number of considerations from the report, including the following:

- Some 6,000 tonnes of lead from ammunition used in shotgun and rifle shooting are being discharged every year. At least 2,000 tonnes of shot used for game and pest shooting are irretrievably and unevenly deposited on or close to the soil surface where it is available for ingestion by birds. It probably becomes unavailable to them quite quickly, though it remains in the soil and substrates for a long time with as yet unknown consequences.
- Lead shot and bullet fragments can be present in game meat at levels sufficient to cause significant health risks to children and adult consumers, depending on the amount of game they consume.
- Current regulations restricting the use of lead shot in wetlands and for shooting wildfowl are apparently not achieving their aim and are insufficient for dealing with the wider risks because it is now known not to be just a wetland problem
- Safer alternatives to lead ammunition are now available and being improved and adapted all the time for use in different shooting disciplines. There is considerable experience from other countries where change has already been undertaken.
- There is no evidence to suggest that a phase out of lead ammunition and the use of alternatives would have significant drawbacks for wildlife or human health or, at least, none that carry the same scale of risks as continuing use of lead; though there are procedural, technical and R&D issues still to work on and resolve.

- There is no convincing evidence on which to conclude that other options, short of replacement of lead ammunition, will address known risks to human health, especially child health.

1.3 Calls for a ban of lead shot

The evidence has resulted in the [WWT, RSPB and the Sustainable Food Trust](#) to call for lead shot to be phased out by 2017. According to the [AEWA](#) Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway are countries that have implemented a full ban. However the Norwegian Parliament [voted](#) earlier this year to lift the ban.

The FSA [advice on the consumption of game](#), from October 2015, is that eating lead-shot game on a frequent basis can expose consumers to potentially harmful levels of lead, although it does not clarify what it means by frequent.

[Shooting organisations](#) are of the view that there are no effective alternatives to lead shot, based on performance and cost. The [British Association of Shooting and Conservation](#) is against any change to the legislation stating that there is no risk to those who do not eat shot game meat more than once a week. It states that research has provided evidence that although individual waterfowl can be affected by lead shot deposition there is no impact on the overall populations of birds. The [Countryside Alliance](#) has also objected to a ban and has expressed the view that “any further unjustified restrictions could have serious implications for the gun trade, the rural economy and the natural environment.”

2. News Articles

War of words erupts over email suggesting imminent ban on lead ammunition

February 10, 2015 [WMNPBowern](#) Western Morning News
<http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/War-words-erupts-email-suggesting-imminent-ban/story-26002957-detail/story.html>

Lead poisons '100,000 birds annually' BBC News article on lead shot

26 November 2015 Victoria Gill
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-34861602>

Scots birds still being poisoned by lead shot'

8 May 2015 Ilona Amos Scotsman
<http://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/scots-birds-still-being-poisoned-by-lead-shot-1-3766517>

Lead risk to children who eat game

11 October 2015 Patrick Sawyer Daily Telegraph
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/countryside/11924359/Countryside-at-odds-over-lead-risk-to-children-who-eat-game.html>

3. Press Releases

British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) responds to attacks on lead shot

November 26 2015

In the face of renewed attacks on lead shot BASC's position on legal restrictions remains unequivocal – no evidence, no change. We refuse to countenance any decisions proposed by policy-makers, regulators or others that are not backed by solid, scientific evidence. Any legislation must be justified and proportionate. For a full statement of policy see www.basc.org.uk/about-basc/basc-policies/basc-policy-on-lead-ammunition/

The government is currently considering the report by the Lead Ammunition Group (LAG), and the Food Standards Authority has issued guidance (www.food.gov.uk/science/advice-to-frequent-eaters-of-game-shot-with-lead). BASC research shows that this guidance, coupled with Swedish data, reveals that:

There is no risk to those who do not eat shot game meat more than once a week throughout the year

There is no risk to those eating small game if the pellet and pellet channel are cut out

There is no risk to those eating large game if meat is cut out 10cms either side of the bullet channel and from around bullet fragments.

Research has also provided evidence that although individual waterfowl can be affected by lead shot deposition there is no impact on the overall populations of birds; their conservation status remains unchanged.

BASC is fully engaged with other shooting organisations in the UK and in Europe to ensure that decisions on lead ammunition are scientifically justified and necessary. BASC already briefs MPs and peers on a range all issues affecting shooting, including lead ammunition.

<http://basc.org.uk/blog/press-releases/latest-news/basc-responds-to-attacks-on-lead-shot/>

Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB)

**RSPB Blog: Taking the Lead
27 November 2015**

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/archive/2015/11/27/lead.aspx>

RSPB Lead poisoning in birds of prey

Lead has long been recognised as a poison to living organisms, and legislation to combat toxicosis in waterbirds has been implemented in several countries around the world. However, less well publicised is the extent of poisoning through the ingestion of lead pellets or bullet fragments in prey by non-waterbird species, especially birds of prey.

https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/leadpoisoning2_tcm9-133155.pdf

4. Parliamentary Material

4.1 Debate

HC Debate on lead shot

Adjournment Debate on [Lead Shot](#) Lead member: Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP)
HC Deb 23 October 2015 Vol 551 cc894-902

4.2 Parliamentary Questions:

- [Lead: Ammunition](#)
- **Asked by Mark Pritchard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect on gunmakers of a ban on the use of lead in shotgun ammunition; and what plans she has to introduce such a ban.

Answered by: Rory Stewart: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

The Government is considering the independent Lead Ammunition Group's report on the effect of lead shot on human and wildlife health and will respond as soon as possible.

A representative from the Gun Trade Association contributed to the group and the formation of its report.

HC Deb 26 November 2015 PQ 17339

- [Birds: Conservation](#)
- **Asked by Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Resolution 11.15 adopted by the Eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals in November 2014, what assessment she has made of the extent and type of poisoning risk from lead ammunition in the UK.

Answered by: Rory Stewart: Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

The Government is considering the independent Lead Ammunition Group's report on the effect of lead shot on human and wildlife health and will respond as soon as possible. The Food Standards Agency has produced advice on the consumption of lead shot game which can be accessed at <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/advice-to-frequent-eaters-of-game-shot-with-lead>.

HC Deb 19 November 2015 PQ 16061

- [Lead: Health Hazards](#)
- **Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what level of lead consumption his Department has defined as safe; and what evidence his Department has received on the mean level of lead in (a) game meat and (b) game meat shot with lead ammunition.

Answered by: Jane Ellison Secretary of State for Health: The Government set up the independent Lead Ammunition Group in 2010 to provide advice on risks to wildlife and human health from lead shot game. The Government is considering the independent Lead Ammunition Group's report on the effect of lead shot on human and wildlife health and will respond as soon as possible. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) accepts the expert advice of the UK

Committee on Toxicity and the European Food Safety Authority that it is not possible to set a safe level for exposure to lead from food. However, to better understand the potential risk to UK consumers the FSA produced a risk assessment in 2012 based on its survey data from 2007 of game meat samples; Veterinary Medicines Directorate data from the national surveillance scheme was also considered. The FSA risk assessment considered the potential levels of exposure to lead from lead shot game for adults, children and toddlers based on different levels of game meat consumption.

This risk assessment led to FSA issuing targeted advice to frequent consumers of lead shot game in 2012, warning of the potential risks. The advice was promoted as especially important for vulnerable groups such as toddlers and children, pregnant women and women trying for a baby, as exposure to lead can harm the developing brain and nervous system. The FSA risk assessment was published along with this advice. The Government has not estimated the number of people who regularly consume game meat shot with lead. More generally, the FSA, works on behalf of the UK within the European Union to agree harmonised controls to reduce public exposure to lead in the food chain. EU maximum limits apply for lead in a range of foods and these are regularly reviewed by the EU Commission and member states. These maximum limits apply to all food produced in the EU or imported to the EU.

HC Deb 19 November 2015 PQ 16009

- [Lead: Ammunition](#)
- **Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence her Department has received on the potential effect on the sport of shooting that would result from the phase out of the use of lead ammunition for sport shooting in England.

-
- **Answered by: Rory Stewart the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:** The Government is considering the independent Lead Ammunition Group's report on the effect of lead shot on human and wildlife health and will respond as soon as possible. The Food Standards Agency has produced advice on the consumption of lead shot game which can be accessed at <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/advice-to-frequent-eaters-of-game-shot-with-lead>.

- **HC Deb 19 November 2015 PQ16008**

-
-
- [Lead: Ammunition](#)
- **Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the animal welfare benefits of the proper use of non-toxic alternatives to lead ammunition for sports shooting; and what comparative assessment she has made of the policies adopted in other countries and their effect on animal welfare.

Answered by: Rory Stewart the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: The Government is considering the independent Lead Ammunition Group's report on the effect of lead shot on human and wildlife health and will respond as soon as possible. The Food Standards Agency has produced advice on the consumption of lead shot game which can be accessed at <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/advice-to-frequent-eaters-of-game-shot-with-lead>.

HC Deb 19 November 2015 PQ16007

5. Useful links and further reading

BASC responds to attacks on lead shot

In the face of renewed attacks on lead shot BASC's position on legal restrictions remains unequivocal – no evidence, no change. We refuse to countenance any decisions proposed by policy-makers, regulators or others that are not backed by solid, scientific evidence.

<http://basc.org.uk/lead/>

Lead Ammunition Group

Following concerns about the impacts of lead ammunition on the health of wildlife and people consuming game shot with lead, the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** (Defra) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) set up the Lead Ammunition Group in 2010. This group of key stakeholders and experts were brought together to identify key risks and explore possible solutions, and to advise the government departments accordingly.

This site contains the background to the setting up of the Lead Ammunition Group, procedural matters, including minutes of the meetings, plus the outputs from the Group.

<http://www.leadammunitiongroup.org.uk/>

Statement on LAG website:

Final report

The final Lead Ammunition Group report, with its substantive appendices, including the various risk assessments and risk mitigation register was submitted to Defra and FSA on 3rd June 2015. It is being considered currently and will be published here in due course.

<http://www.leadammunitiongroup.org.uk/reports/>

DEFRA and lead shot

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) Lead Shot Compliance

7 July 2014 FOI release Defra

Documents produced by the WWT Lead Shot Compliance Steering Group.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wildfowl-and-wetlands-trust-wwt-lead-shot-compliance>

[Wildfowl and Wetland Trust \(WWT\) lead shot compliance report](#)

5 June 2014 FOI release Defra

All documents relating to drafting and circulation of request for ministerial approval to publish WWT lead shot compliance report.

[Minutes from the WWT lead shot compliance report meetings](#)

30 April 2014 FOI release Defra

Minutes from the WWT lead shot compliance report meetings

Blogs from Standing up for Nature Mark Avery

<http://markavery.info/2015/09/14/friendly-challenge-wwt-rspb/>

<http://markavery.info/blog/>

<http://markavery.info/2015/09/09/findings-lead-ammunition-group/>

Blog - [George Monbiot's blog](#) The Guardian

The Countryside Alliance's neo-feudal shotgun lead campaign George Monbiot's blog:Lead shot poisons birds. But for wildlife crime committed by or on behalf of our lords and masters, enforcement is non-existent

Countryside Alliance Latest News on the lead shot ammunition debate

<http://www.countryside-alliance.org/?s=lead+shot>

RSPB Publications:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/search/index.aspx?q='lead%20shot'>

Extracts below on lead shot:

... Poisoning from lead shot in waterbirds has been well documented globally and, in some countries, legislation exists to combat lead toxicosis at wetlands ..

www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/publications/index.aspx?ddlThemes=Agriculture&ddlYear=&ddlBird=&ddlCountry=&page=6

Potential Hazard to Human Health from Exposure to Fragments of Lead Bullets and Shot in the Tissues of Game Animals. ...

www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/publications/index.aspx?ddlThemes=identifying%20problems&ddlYear=&ddlBird=&ddlCountry=&page=5

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).