

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE OUTLINES PROGRAM FOR CONVERSION TO IRON SHOT FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING

Spencer Smith, Director of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, today announced that the Service intends to move as rapidly as possible toward a conversion from lead shot to iron shot, or any other suitable nontoxic ammunition, in order to eliminate lead poisoning as a significant waterfowl mortality factor.

"For the 1973-74 hunting season, the use of iron shot will be expanded to the degree permitted by available supplies of ammunition," Smith said. "Mandatory use of iron shot throughout one flyway will be the aim of the program for the 1974-75 hunting season. Unless ongoing tests turn up unexpected technological problems," he said, "the Service hopes to recommend regulations imposing a nationwide ban on the use of lead shot for the 1975-76 waterfowl season."

Waterfowl losses to lead poisoning have been known in the United States since the early 1900's. The poisoning is caused when the birds pick up spent lead pellets while feeding, and is estimated to kill 2 to 3 million waterfowl annually. Wildlife managers have long believed that the solution to this problem was to substitute a nontoxic material for the lead commonly used in shotgun pellets.

A cooperative study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, 1966-68, confirmed earlier suggestions that soft iron shot was approximately as effective as lead in killing waterfowl. Various technological and manufacturing problems had to be solved, however, before iron shot ammunition could be offered to hunters.

It now appears that most of these problems have been overcome by the ammunition industry. Iron shot ammunition of improved design was provided by manufacturers for use in a pilot hunting program conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service last fall. Hunters on seven federally managed public hunting areas used it and found the shells comparable to lead shot ammunition. Further tests on ballistics and performance are being conducted by manufacturers and are expected to lead to more improvements.

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