

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release November 20, 1979

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STATISTICS INDICATE LEAD AND STEEL SHOT PERFORM ABOUT EQUALLY,  
BUT GOOSE HUNTERS INVOLVED IN TEST DON'T THINK SO

A recent field test of lead and steel shot ammunition has found that, contrary to popular belief, steel shot loads used in hunting geese perform about the same as lead.

The test, however, also found that the opinions of the participating hunters did not reflect the actual performance of the ammunition. Hunters had a lower opinion of steel shot than lead, even though test results showed steel and lead loads to be very similar at all ranges.

The test, conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the assistance of the Oregon Institute of Technology, also demonstrated that marksmanship and the range at which shots are fired are far more important factors in bagging geese than the type of ammunition used.

The test was conducted under normal hunting conditions at Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, California, during the hunting seasons of 1977 and 1978. Over 2,000 hunters voluntarily participated in the test, firing 32,000 shells and bagging 4,209 white-fronted, snow, and cackling geese. Twelve-gauge, one and half ounce lead loads in shot sizes No. 4, 2, and BB were compared to 12-gauge, one and an eighth ounce steel loads in shot sizes No. 2, 1, and BB.

There were no significant differences between lead and steel in bagging or crippling geese. In fact, no significant differences could be detected in the performance of any of the six loads tested. The performance of lead and steel was very similar at all shooting distances.

Combining all six loads, the hunters bagged only six geese per 100 shots fired at ranges greater than 50 yards. They bagged 15 geese per 100 shots fired at 30 to 50 yards, and 27 geese per 100 shots fired at less than 30 yards. The average shooting distance was 50 yards.

Although most hunters believe that more birds are crippled at greater shooting distances, the Tule Lake tests did not confirm this. Instead, the highest crippling rate occurred between 30 and 50 yards where 9 geese were crippled per 100 shots fired.

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Editors: Photographs and a more detailed report on this ammunition test are available from the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240 (202-343-5634)