

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## WATERFOWL CRIPPLING RATE BY STEEL, LEAD NEARLY SAME, JOINT TEST BY FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, MISSOURI REVEALS

The rate at which migratory waterfowl were crippled by nontoxic steel shot was virtually the same as that of lead shot during a recent Federal-State shooting test, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced.

The comparison shooting was sponsored by the Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation at the Schell-Osage State Wildlife Management Area in November and December of 1979.

Steel shot has been required for use in certain areas of the country by the Fish and Wildlife Service as a way of reducing the incidence of lead poisoning in waterfowl. About 2 million birds die of lead poisoning in the United States annually after eating spent lead shot, which they mistake for seeds or grit. Steel shot is not harmful to waterfowl if it is eaten.

However, some critics of nontoxic steel shot have charged that it results in a higher incidence of crippling of migratory birds than traditional lead shot, something not borne out by these recent test results.

The Missouri testing involved about 1,300 volunteer hunters who fired approximately 11,000 shots, bagging 2,000 ducks during the 50-day hunting season. Trained observers accompanied the hunters to randomly assigned blinds, where the effectiveness of two-and-three-quarter-inch 12-gauge lead and steel shotshell loads were tested. Both observers and hunters recorded the number of shots fired, distances of shots, and number of ducks bagged or crippled. At no time during the tests, however, did the observers and hunters know the shot type or load being tested.

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Using Super Double X Magnum 1½-ounce No. 4 buffered lead, Super X 1½-ounce No. 4 lead, Super X 1½-ounce No. 2 steel, and Super X 1½-ounce No. 4 steel, hunters and observers recorded the following results, per 100 shots fired:

	<u>Hunter Reports:</u>		<u>Observer Reports:</u>	
	Lead:	Steel:	Lead:	Steel:
Ducks bagged:	20.1	17.9	19.9	17.8
Ducks crippled:	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.7

After a statistical analysis of the data by the Missouri Department of Conservation researchers, percentages indicated no significant difference in the rate of crippling between steel and lead load users. About two more ducks were bagged per 100 shots with lead than with steel loads, however.

A more complete analysis of other test data is being conducted by both Missouri and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The full test results will be published jointly at a future date.

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Year of the Coast