



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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SERVICE TO PROPOSE USING NONTOXIC SHOT ON SOME NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES FOR HUNTING UPLAND GAME

To protect waterfowl and other migratory birds from potential lead poisoning, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will propose regulations in 1995 requiring the use of nontoxic shot for hunting upland game on selected national wildlife refuges. This requirement was successfully implemented on the West Coast in 1991 and in the Southwest during the 1992-93 hunting season.

The shift away from lead for hunting upland species such as pheasants, quail, rabbits, doves, and snipe will be required for the 1995-96 hunting seasons on certain areas of some national wildlife refuges, except in Alaska. It will be required in 1996-97 on all waterfowl production areas and on all refuges in Alaska in the 1997-98 hunting season, although some areas may convert earlier.

Nontoxic shot will not be required for big game hunting on refuges, including turkey hunting, nor for small game hunting with small-caliber rifles in the absence of site-specific evidence of significant impacts.

Refuge managers currently are identifying specific refuges and locations where nontoxic shot will be mandatory for non-waterfowl hunting programs (with the exception of big game) and will coordinate with state wildlife agencies. A comprehensive outreach program will be conducted in each region to inform hunters, hunter education and hunter safety instructors, and others in the local outdoor recreation community about the changes.

Nontoxic (non-lead) shot was phased in nationwide for hunting waterfowl beginning in 1986 because of toxicity to waterfowl and the secondary poisoning of bald eagles. It has substantially reduced lead deposition in most wetlands. However, biologists are now concerned about the potential threat posed by the deposition of lead into wetlands and associated uplands from upland game hunting and the risk that lead pellets may be consumed by waterfowl and other migratory birds.