HOW DOES NON-TOXIC SHOT COMPARE?

Lead pellets have been the traditional material for shotgun use, but steel and other non-toxic shot types offer effective alternatives for shotgun ammunition.

Steel pellets are lighter and harder than lead, qualities that should be considered by the shooter.

Steel shotshells generally have more pellets, higher velocity, and shorter and narrower shot string than lead shells with comparable size pellets.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT USING NON-TOXIC SHOT

Switching shot types will cost a fortune!
Nearly all non-toxic steel shot is now comparable in price to lead.

Non-toxic shot doesn’t hit as hard or take birds as effectively!
Steel shot actually arrives on target in a tighter pattern, in a shorter shot-string. Manufacturers address energy loss due to density by increasing velocity.

Steel shot actually penetrates game better than lead. Lead pellets deform more, causing indentations in the pellets. When hitting a bird, these indentations snag on feathers of the bird, reducing penetration. Generally, hunters should use steel shot two sizes larger than they would use in lead.

Non-toxic shot will wreck my gun!
Extensive research, testing steel and other non-toxic shot, shows it to be both safe and effective. Because non-toxic shot shells are designed with a thicker plastic or corrugated plastic one-piece wad technology, this ensures the shot does not come in contact with the gun barrel. Most guns on the market today can handle steel and other non-toxic shot. Consult a gunsmith prior to using with antique firearms.
WHY IS LEAD SHOT HARMFUL?

The harmful impacts of using lead shot include death from lead poisoning of waterfowl and other wild birds when they ingest spent shot.

Other losses can occur with the poisoning of raptors and scavengers when they eat other animals which contain lead shot.

Although large scale die-offs due to lead poisoning have decreased since the ban on lead shot for waterfowl hunting, lead poisoning is still a concern for some bird species such as bald eagles and trumpeter swans.

Photograph courtesy of Kevin Sinclair

Thousands of trumpeter swans have died of lead poisoning at and near Judson Lake, a lead polluted water body straddling the Canada/USA border in British Columbia.

WHY USE NON-TOXIC SHOT?

Non-toxic shot simplifies your hunting trip. You can hunt ducks, doves, pheasant and other small game with no legal concern about possessing lead shot.

Non-toxic shotshell ammunition is proven effective for hunting waterfowl and other game within reasonable shotgun range.

Small game and target loads of steel and other non-toxic shot in 12 and 20 gauge are becoming widely available online and in some Wisconsin stores.

When wildlife are exposed to toxic levels of lead, damage occurs to the nervous system, causing paralysis and eventual death; at lower levels it is known to cause a variety of sublethal effects such as neurological damage, tissue and organ damage, and reproductive impairment.

Lead shot ingestion and subsequent poisoning can occur in a wide variety of wildlife including waterfowl, upland game birds, shorebirds, raptors and scavengers. Fortunately, non-toxic shot is not toxic to wildlife when ingested.

This x-ray image reveals the fate of a bald eagle that ingested prey that had been wounded with lead shot. Arrows point to the accumulated lead shot lodged within the body of the bird.

The photograph shows a bald eagle suffering from the debilitating effects of lead.

Photograph courtesy of the Raptor Center

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