

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB ON LEAD AMMUNITION

FRIDAY, JULY 12, 2019

The Boone and Crockett Club released a position statement in light of California's statewide ban on lead ammunition for hunters, which took effect on July 1, 2019.

Triggered by concerns for the endangered California condor, which inhabit some regions of the state, a bill was signed into law in October 2013 banning all lead ammunition for the taking of game anywhere in the state.

"The history of wildlife conservation in North America has been shaped by the choices sportsmen make to benefit wildlife and their habitats," said Timothy C. Brady, president of the Boone and Crockett Club. "Unfortunately for the sportsmen in California, legislators have made the decision about the use of lead even in areas of California where condors aren't present."

Studies have shown that lead bullet fragments left in the remains of harvested big game animals can unintentionally increase the risk of sickness or mortality when ingested by condors. In other states where condors exist, state wildlife agencies are offering hunter education and providing non-lead ammunition for use in those areas. Sportsmen themselves are opting to use non-lead ammunition in certain situations to reduce the probability of unintentionally impacting scavenging raptors. These efforts have met with success, both in acceptance from sportsmen and reductions in lead fragments left in the field.

The new position statement reads in part that:

Scientific wildlife management recognizes that while the mortality of an individual bird is a concern, it may not necessarily indicate a threat to an entire population and warrant a blanket nationwide or statewide ban of lead ammunition.

The Club believes that if an individual state wildlife agency decides that lead exposure represents a population-level issue for a particular species in a given area, it should be up to that agency (not federal/state legislators or voters) to implement targeted solutions that do not unnecessarily restrict hunting or shooting opportunities, including hunter education, voluntary programs, or mandatory programs using suitable ammunition alternatives.

Brady explained, "The science and the steps that need to be taken to protect bird species from ingesting lead needs to be interpreted by wildlife professionals and limited to the geographic areas and population levels where the problem exists. The Club believes California has taken an overly broad approach to addressing the problem of lead fragments where condors exist, but there is no scientific basis to support nationwide or statewide bans."

A century ago, sportsmen supported limiting harvest and regulating hunting seasons so game species would recover and thrive. Sportsmen chose to tax

themselves to supply a reliable stream of funding for conservation and game management. As a result of other actions and contributions by sportsmen, regulated hunting has become an irreplaceable mechanism for conservation.

Brady concluded, "As sportsmen, we take great pride in our legacy of doing what needs to be done and

adapting as the science of wildlife health continues to evolve. Lead is a proven threat to condors. History shows that politicizing wildlife conservation and taking it out of the hands of trained professionals can be just as harmful." ■



BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB POSITION STATEMENT ON LEAD IN AMMUNITION FOR HUNTING AND SHOOTING

EFFECTIVE DATE: JUNE 12, 2017 - REVISED: JUNE 6, 2019

The Boone and Crockett Club supports the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which specifically recognizes science as the basis for informed management and decision-making processes. Scientific wildlife management recognizes that while the mortality of an individual bird is a concern, it may not necessarily indicate a threat to an entire population and warrant a blanket nationwide or statewide ban of lead ammunition. The Club urges agencies and organizations to promote scientific research about the effects of lead ammunition on avian scavengers, and support needed policies and management actions based on sound, peer-reviewed science that manages wildlife at the population level.

While the Club supports current federal regulations pertaining to the use of lead shot for all waterfowl regardless of location, it maintains that state wildlife agencies (not federal/state legislators or voters) are in the best position to determine if another species within their state is at risk and if this situation warrants restrictions on the use of lead ammunition. For this reason, the Club believes that if an individual state wildlife agency decides that lead exposure represents a population-level issue for a particular species in a given area, it should be up to that agency to implement targeted solutions that do not unnecessarily restrict hunting or shooting opportunities, including hunter education, voluntary programs, or mandatory programs using suitable ammunition alternatives.

The Boone and Crockett Club also supports a Fair Chase® hunting ethic, which includes sportsmen making personal choices to ensure the ethical hunting of game to benefit wildlife conservation in general. Sportsmen should be aware of potential unintended consequences to non-hunted species, and if they feel this may be a concern in the areas where they hunt, the Club supports sportsmen choosing to use alternative ammunition.

The Boone and Crockett Club will look closer at this topic in the upcoming Spring 2020 issue of *Fair Chase*.

Read the entire position statement online at Boone-Crockett.org.