

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
Environment & Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 741 – Hunting - Nonlead Ammunition, et al., **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ted Williams. As a full-time freelance writer for the last half century, I've written exclusively about fish and wildlife for national publications such as *Outdoor Life*, *Audubon*, *Sierra*, *National Wildlife*, *Smithsonian*, *Modern Maturity*, *Yankee*, and *Slate*. I'm a life-long hunter and own a dozen guns. As a former information officer for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, I worked closely with my fellow hunters. I continue to work with them.

It baffles me why so many of my fellow hunters insist on poisoning wildlife (including their game), themselves, their children, their wives and their friends when they can use non-toxic copper bullets which cost something like \$2 more per box of 20 than lead. The added expense amounts to roughly the cost of a cup of coffee per hunting season. Any non-antique firearm can safely shoot copper.

The claim I've been hearing from lead defenders that squirrel hunters can't buy non-toxic .22 rimfire ammo is patently false. It is now readily available and, like higher caliber non-toxic ammo, only marginally more expensive. What's more, tests by the Wildlife Society show that it performs as well or better than lead. (<https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wsb.1255>)

Readily available non-toxic .22 rimfire products include: Norma ECO Speed-2, CCI® TNT® Green .22 WMR 30 Grain Lead-Free Rimfire Ammo, and Hornady Varmint Express Rimfire 17HMR 15.5 Grain Nontoxic.

In its program "Sportsmen Against Hunger" the Safari Club donates deer its members kill to the needy. Acting on data collected by University of North Dakota medical professor and Safari Club member Dr. William Cornatzer, the health departments of North Dakota and Minnesota impounded 17,000 pounds of donated, lead-impregnated venison.

Iowa requires this warning label on venison donated by hunters in the “Help Us Stop Hunger” program: “Lead fragments may be found in processed venison. Children under 6 years and pregnant women are at the greatest risk from lead.”

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends “the use of non-lead ammunition as the simplest and most effective solution to lead poisoning, in both humans and wildlife, arising from the consumption of deer killed with lead ammunition.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture certifies commercial meat lockers. But neither it nor the Food and Drug Administration regulates lead in donated venison.

The CDC reports: “No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to negatively affect a child’s intelligence, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.”

I polled the most hardcore big-game hunters I know. They serve with me on the Outdoor Writers of America Association’s Circle of Chiefs. A few of their comments:

Jim Low: “I’ve been hunting whitetails exclusively with copper bullets -- center-fire and muzzleloader -- for about 15 years and have nothing but praise. Highly accurate, sturdy, excellent expansion and weight retention.”

Matt Miller: “I have found copper superior in every way in my hunting for mule deer, whitetail, pronghorn and feral hog.”

Scott Stouder: “Nothing but stellar performance and the knowledge that I’m not killing others out there from magpies to eagles.”

Larry Stone: “Accurate, hard-hitting, and no fragmentation.”

Mike Furtman: “As I hunted deer today, I sat within sight of the gut pile from the doe I killed two days ago. Much of it had been eaten already, but what remained was dined upon by two bald eagles, three ravens, two pileated woodpeckers, one hairy woodpecker, several blue jays, and numerous chickadees and nuthatches. Which is why I switched to copper bullets.”

Ammo companies developed copper bullets not to protect wildlife or humans, but to kill game more effectively than lead bullets. They do. Hunters have known this for years. In 2012 *American Hunter*, the official publication of the National Rifle

Association, selected the Barnes VOR-TX copper bullet for its “Ammunition Product of the Year Award.” And *American Hunter* field editor Bryce Towsley writes that the Barnes all-copper X-Bullet “redefines what we think we know about hunting projectiles.” And in a good way: “I have lost count of the game I have taken with Barnes X-Bullets in various configurations.”

The North American Non-Lead Partnership -- committed to protecting wildlife from poisoning by lead bullets -- includes 46 partners, all of which represent hunters -- members like The Peregrine Fund (founded by hunters using falcons), Midwest and Northeastern Associations of Fish Wildlife Agencies, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Oregon Hunters Association, Arizona Elk Society, Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and Arizona Wild Turkey Federation.

The Partnership sponsors demonstrations in which copper and lead bullets are fired into plastic bags filled with water and housed in plastic drums. Slugs and fragments fall to the bottom of the drums. In one typical demo, hosted by Allen Zufelt of the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Partnership co-founder Chris Parish, Zufelt fires a Federal Nosler AccuBond 180-grain lead bullet, then a 180-grain Federal Trophy Copper bullet. Parish retrieves and weighs the two mushroomed slugs. The copper slug weighs 179.9 grains. The lead slug weighs 137.5 grains, having shed and scattered 42.5 grains of fragments.

The toxicity of lead hunting projectiles is ancient news. George Bird Grinnell published this warning in his sporting weekly *Forest & Stream*: “Until they reach the gizzard where the wildfowl grinds his food, these pellets do no harm, but, when reduced to powder...they become a violent poison.” The year was 1894.

Here are links to some of my other pieces on the poisoning of wildlife with lead bullets (and fishing tackle):

<https://www.landcan.org/landcan-blog/Poison-Bullets/349>

<https://www.hcn.org/wotr/let-them-eat-copper/>

<https://blog.nature.org/2016/11/28/recovery-saving-common-loon-lead-fishing-tackle-poisoning-birds/>

Respectfully Submitted,

Ted Williams