TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE NONTOXIC SHOT FOR TAKING SMALL GAME IN CERTAIN AREAS (HF 3342).

Respectfully submitted, Carrol Henderson, Blaine, Minnesota, February 24, 2020

My name is Carrol Henderson, and I am commenting as a private citizen and avid lifetime hunter in support for this legislation to require the use of nontoxic shotgun ammo on Minnesota's Wildlife Management Areas in the agricultural zone. I have hunted small game, including pheasants, since I was ten years old. I am not an anti-hunter. I am a hunter-conservationist who cares about nature, all wildlife (game and nongame), healthy habitats for wildlife, and about preserving our American hunting heritage and traditions. I have been using steel shot for hunting upland game for over 30 years.

The quality of steel shot ammunition, its effectiveness on small game, its availability in a wide variety of gauges and loads, prices comparable with premium loads of lead shot, and its impressive acceptance among hunters for waterfowl hunting have all greatly improved over the past 30 years. These reasons make steel shot the preferred ammunition of the future for hunting waterfowl and upland game. But there are even more important reasons for this legislation. We need it to preserve the role and image of hunters as conservationists, to protect wildlife both game and nongame from lead poisoning, to end the deposition of lead on our Wildlife Management Areas, and to protect human health.

Lead has long been used for shotguns pellets because it was cheap and easy to manufacture. Now its dark side has been revealed as a neurotoxic poison metal. Research has shown its detrimental effects on both wildlife and humans. Legislation has banned lead from paint, gasoline, coatings for children's toys, and shotgun ammunition for waterfowl hunting. Ammunition manufacturers are rapidly expanding their lines of steel ammo for all hunting.

Public opinion favors phasing out lead ammo. A 2015 state fair survey by Minnesota Senate Research (4,353 respondents) showed that 73% of the public believed lead ammunition should be phased out on all public lands, and 64% supported phasing out lead ammunition on both public and private lands. A DNR public input survey about eliminating use of lead shot on WMAs was supported by 60% of 3,743 respondents.

Adding lead shotgun pellets to our public wildlife lands every year is cumulative. The more society learns about the detrimental effects of lead on people and wildlife, the more restrictions they place on its use. In South Dakota, nontoxic ammunition is required for hunting on their public hunting lands. In Minnesota, nontoxic ammunition is required for hunting waterfowl and upland game on all federal Waterfowl Production Areas. Pheasant hunters hunting adjacent WPAs and WMAs would benefit from the simplicity of having steel required on both lands.

Some hunters and hunting organizations have objected to having restrictions placed on lead ammunition. They believe this is an attempt by "anti-hunters" to stop hunting, and to threaten gun ownership and the second amendment. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is an opportunity for hunters to take responsibility for correcting this problem. Hunters can promote using nontoxic ammunition to help protect all wildlife and demonstrate their longstanding role as "hunter-conservationists" who care about preserving healthy habitats and protecting wildlife.

Another important consideration involves preserving our legacy of hunting traditions through R-3 programs. However, many people targeted in these programs would be shocked to realize that lead ammo is still used and still promoted by some hunters and hunting organizations. These people would also be very concerned by the potential human health threat of accidentally feeding small lead pellets in small game meat to a hunter's family and friends. R-3 Programs need to be strong advocates for nontoxic ammo, or potential hunters will look for hobbies elsewhere….

Based on 2018 DNR statistics, hunters averaged 3.7 roosters per person. Estimating five shots fired for each pheasant bagged, this projects to about 19 shells fired per person for an estimate of $16.72 per season for steel ammo--about $1.30 per season more expensive than the same number of lead shells. The US Fish and Wildlife Service estimated in 2011 that the mean expenditure for a small game hunter in Minnesota was $532 per year. The annual cost of steel ammo for pheasant hunting would be less than 1% of the total expenditures per hunter.

The DNR estimates that 55,861 pheasant hunters harvested 205,395 pheasants in 2018. That many hunters would fire over one million shells and spread about 36 tons of lead onto Minnesota's farmlands and WMAs annually. Unfortunately, this would include late season pheasant hunting in cattail marshes adjacent to WMA wetlands where steel shot is mandatory for waterfowl hunting. Lead does not degrade, Toxic pellets remain in the soil or marsh for many decades. Our public Wildlife Management Areas have become cumulative toxic lead shot waste dumping grounds.

I sincerely believe most hunters care about Minnesota's outdoors, all wildlife, and about preserving their image as hunter-conservationists. The era of lead ammo is dying—it has no apparent advantages over steel and it is not ecologically acceptable. Adapting to nontoxic ammo is not a threat to hunting traditions. It is part of the evolution of our hunting traditions and it is an opportunity for hunters to take a leadership role in reclaiming their image as America's conservationists.

FAQS ABOUT LEAD SHOT AND STEEL SHOT.

1. **Why is lead shot a threat to wildlife? Lead shotgun pellets that fall to the ground in hunting areas are toxic for many years. Eagles, hawks, and falcons may feed on unretrieved dead and dying game that contains lead shot and subsequently die, even from a single shotgun pellet. Birds like pheasants and mourning doves can die after eating single lead pellets they mistake as grit or seeds.**
2. **Has the problem of lead poisoning in wildlife been documented scientifically? Toxic effects of lead ammo on wildlife have been well documented and published in scientific papers. At least 130 wildlife species have been verified as poisoned by lead ammo. Google "Oxford Lead Symposium" and "Grover, Warner and Coffey" in *Reviews of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology,* 2016, Volume 237.**
3. **What is R-3 and how does it relate to lead shot use? There is a long term downward trend in the participation by people in hunting and fishing. The DNR is investing heavily in an R-3 "Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation" program. Their goal is to increase the number of people who hunt and fish. Audiences include millennials, foodies, locavores, women, and children who would not want to use lead ammo or eat it.**