

ASSEMBLY BILL 711 (RENDON/PAN)

Protect wildlife, humans and the environment from toxic lead contamination

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Passed Assembly 44-21

Endorsed by:



Lead is a toxin that is bad for human health and the environment, and lead ammunition exposes humans and other animals to this life-threatening poison.

Like mercury and arsenic, lead is a known toxin that has been outlawed and removed from paint, gasoline, pipes, children’s toys and many other products to protect human health and the environment. The Centers for Disease Control and leading scientists from around the country agree that there is no safe level of lead exposure for humans. Lead-based ammunition is one of the greatest sources of lead discharged to our lands and water. Scientists agree that this poses a significant risk to human health and the environment. Meat from animals shot with lead ammunition poses as a health risk to humans. Because lead shatters upon impact, meat from animals shot by hunters using lead ammunition often contains tiny fragments of lead that are ingested by humans and other animals.



The toxic effects of lead ammunition continue to persist in California’s environment. In early February, a bald eagle died from lead poisoning at the California Raptor Center at the University of California at Davis. The same week, this golden eagle was found near Clearlake suffering from severe lead poisoning. Sadly, she died despite three weeks of veterinary efforts to save her.

Lead ammunition is a critical threat to endangered species like the California Condor.

Lead ammunition still threatens the California Condor, Golden Eagle and other protected species. Similarly, one in five free-flying condors has ingested such significant levels of lead from these sources that they are at risk of dying from lead poisoning. In 2007, non-lead ammunition was required in the California Condor territory in an attempt to abate the chronic lead poisonings of this critically endangered, iconic species. While the ban has been successful in decreasing overall blood lead levels and cases of toxicosis in wildlife, it isn’t enough. Just last year, a study published by the National Academy of Sciences concluded that unless lead ammunition is removed from the environment entirely, the California Condor won’t survive on its own. It only takes a tiny amount of lead to poison animals, causing immense suffering before killing them. That’s also why we need to eliminate lead ammunition, the most significant remaining source of lead in the environment. More than 130 wildlife species are at risk of poisoning by spent lead ammunition.



Eliminating lead ammunition is already a priority for national agencies, and there are safer alternatives available and in use by hunters across the country.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1991 began to require the use of non-lead ammunition like steel and copper for hunting ducks and geese across the United States and the National Park Service in 2009 announced the goal of eliminating the use of lead ammunition. There are already manufacturers of non-lead ammunition in the state of California, and ethical hunters agree that non-lead ammunition often outperforms lead ammunition. Thousands and thousands of hunters in California already use non-lead ammunition. With these alternatives available, there is no reason to continue using toxic lead shotgun shells and bullets. After passage of the earlier law to require using non-lead ammunition in designated condor wildlife areas, we actually saw an increase in hunting licenses issued.

“Many hunters in California are already using non-lead ammunition because they have seen firsthand the risks to wildlife, and would rather be part of the solution,” said Henry Coletto, a **hunter who is also a retired game warden and life member of California Deer Association.** “As demand increases for non-lead ammunition, costs will come down and even more options will become available.”

Assembly Bill 711 is a long overdue reform.

AB 711 proposes to phase in the non-lead requirement over a two-year period after allowing the Fish and Game Commission six months to develop a plan for that phase-in that mitigates the impact on ammunition manufacturers, retailers and hunters. A trusted coalition of veterinarians, children’s health advocates, scientists, hunters and animal and wildlife advocates has formed in order to make phasing out lead ammunition in California a priority by passing AB 711.

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