

Hazards of Lead

Condors and eagles eat carcasses and gut piles.

When those remains contain lead bullet fragments, they eat lead and can die.

Secondary Lead Poisoning and Scavengers

Recent scientific studies show a definitive link between spent lead rifle ammunition and lead poisoning in scavenging birds. Eagles, condors, and vultures eat lead when they feed on animal carcasses or gut piles that contain toxic lead bullet fragments.

A piece of lead the size of a fingernail clipping can be lethal. Once lead enters the bloodstream, it damages a bird's nervous system and paralyze its digestive tract. Without immediate medical assistance, poisoned scavengers usually starve to death or become weak and easy prey.



Lead is poisoning condors.

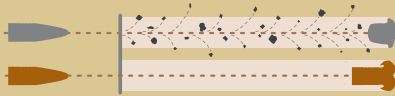
It is the biggest obstacle to the recovery of these rare birds. Testing shows the majority of California condors routinely have blood lead levels that exceed the danger threshold for human children set by the CDC. More than half the flock will require emergency treatment before they mature to breed at 7 years of age.

Between 1992 and 2011:

- In California, at least 12 condors died from lead poisoning.
- In Arizona, 15 condors died from lead poisoning.

The Toxic Legacy of a Single Bullet

Lead core rifle bullets are surrounded a thin copper jacket that peels back on impact. When the soft lead is exposed, it disintegrates, leaving a trail of toxic lead fragments that spread a surprising distance from the bullet's path. Lead remains, even when bullets exit an animal.



Non-lead bullets expand on impact just like lead bullets, but hold together and don't break apart, leaving a clean path surrounding the bullet with little or no fragmentation.

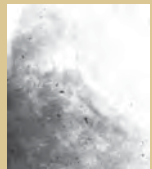


A lead core bullet typically loses 15 - 30% of its weight as it travels through game. If eaten, the fragments from a single bullet (left) can kill many eagles and condors.



Hundreds of lead fragments scattered through a deer neck after a bullet shattered on the spine. When eagles or condors feed on wounded and escaped game that die, these birds can be poisoned and also die.

Every hunting season, hundreds of thousands of gut piles are left in the field. This X-ray shows some of the hundreds of lead fragments left in just one gut pile from a .270 Winchester lead bullet.



Get the lead out. Reducing lead ammo impacts on wildlife and humans.



Lead poisoning is a serious problem for both wildlife and humans, but is easily prevented. Historically, lead has reached us in a number of ways—through gasoline, paint, a variety of manufacturing processes, and in ammunition. As our awareness of the dangers of lead grows, we seek out better alternatives. Unfortunately, the toxic legacy of lead continues to harm wildlife.

Lead Poisoning in Wildlife

In 1991, a federal law banned the use of lead shot in all waterfowl hunting, but not upland bird hunting.

Swans, doves, geese, eagles, and other birds continue to die of lead poisoning after eating spent lead fragments and shot.

Humans and Lead

Recent awareness of lead bullet fragments in processed venison raises concern for human health. Various state health departments warn pregnant women and young children to avoid eating game shot with lead ammunition.



Secondary Poisoning

Any animal that eats game meat shot with lead ammo, including humans, can eat lead fragments. Lead continues to poison bald eagles, golden eagles, and other birds of prey.

Safe for Humans?

Dangerously high blood lead levels are common in societies where hunted wild birds and mammals make up a large part of the diet.

www.huntingwithnonlead.org

