



Use of lead-free ammunition on the land we manage (Scotland's national forests and land)

Key Points

- Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) does not set government policy on the use of ammunition for firearms. However, FLS aspires to implement best practice on Scotland's national forests and land to be an exemplar of sustainable forest management.
- There is evidence that the use of lead ammunition can result in lead contamination of animal carcasses. In the 2017/18 financial year, FLS put approximately 850,000 kilograms of venison into the human food chain. Concern over food contamination is therefore a main driver for changing to lead-free ammunition.
- Spent lead ammunition also poses a significant health risk to wildlife, such as wildfowl and raptors. Concern over harm to wildlife is therefore an additional driver for changing to lead-free ammunition.
- Where FLS has control of the activity, the type of ammunition used on the land we manage is an operational decision for FLS. The choice of ammunition is based on its effectiveness and on environmental considerations, with due consideration for all applicable legislation and government policy.
- FLS continues to trial lead-free bullets for deer and feral pig and effective lead-free ammunition has now been identified for the calibres of firearms used by our wildlife ranger team.
- FLS Wildlife Rangers account for around 31% of the deer shot on Scotland's national forests and land. Since 1st April 2019 all deer and feral pigs culled by FLS Wildlife Rangers has been by lead-free ammunition. Our aim is to reach 100% of our deer and feral pigs culled by non-lead ammunition as soon as possible. This will be dictated by the speed with which the ammunition market develops to provide suitable non-lead ammunition for all relevant calibres used by FLS wildlife culling contractors.
- FLS contractors account for around 60% of the deer shot on the land we manage of which just under half are currently using non-lead ammunition. By 1st December 2022, all FLS contractors will be using lead-free ammunition for shooting deer and feral pigs.

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This will be achieved in a phased way, whereby all contract renewals will stipulate the use of lead-free ammunition.

- This progressive change means that since April 2019 approximately two thirds of all ammunition used will be lead free, and by the end of 2022, all deer and feral pigs entering FLS larders for processing will have been shot by non-lead ammunition.
- A small proportion (approx. 9%) of the deer shot on the land we manage is covered by lease or Recreational Deer Management Permission (RDMP) arrangements. New agreements should stipulate that only lead-free ammunition can be used to shoot all the relevant permitted target species associated with the agreement.
- By 2023, all RDMP holders will use non-lead ammunition. This will be achieved in a phased way similar to contracts.
- Regarding the use of lead ammunition in shotguns The Environmental Protection (Restriction on Use of Lead Shot) (Scotland) (No.2) Regulations 2004. States-
 - *No person shall use lead shot for the purpose of shooting with a shotgun on or over wetlands. Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or artificial, salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.*
- FLS has acquired unleaded shotgun ammunition for testing in feral pig control.
- The development of unleaded shotgun ammunition has been extensive and there are now significant options in the market.
- From the 1st of April, 2021, FLS staff and contractors will only use environmental friendly shotgun cartridges i.e. soft iron shot and organic based wads. In feral pig control unleaded 12ga slugs can be used for humane dispatch.
- All shotgun use under a shooting lease must be in compliance with the Environmental Protection Regulations. On an ongoing basis, opportunities will be actively sought and taken to change lease conditions to stipulate the use of unleaded ammunition in shotguns.