

Non-lead ammunition may reduce lead levels in wild game

Eric J Buenz¹

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Lehel et al. (2016) provide important data regarding the levels of toxic metals in deer meat. As the authors highlight, there is reason for concern regarding lead levels in wild game relative to the European Union standards. Some of this lead exposure is inevitable as the source is environmental; however, some is anthropogenic and avoidable. The authors did not share that a portion of this anthropogenic lead exposure is likely preventable by using non-lead ammunition to harvest the wild game (Buenz 2016).

Other studies have shown that individuals harvesting wild game with lead bullets have elevated blood lead levels, and isotope analyses have linked bullets to these elevated blood lead levels (Tsuji et al. 2009; Tsuji et al. 2008). Importantly, all the studies to date have established correlations, and a prospective study is necessary. Nonetheless, we should be pragmatic. Just as the parachute has never been proven to be effective in a double-blind placebo-controlled study (Smith and Pell 2003), I suggest that high-velocity injection and fragmentation (Knott et al. 2010) of a heavy metal into something that is going to be eaten is unwise and should be avoided if possible.

The World Health Organization has taken the position that there is no safe level of lead exposure (WHO 2009). Thus, any steps available to reduce the potential risk of lead exposure are reasonable to implement, particularly when non-lead ammunition is readily available (Kanstrup et al. 2016).

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Responsible editor: Philippe Garrigues

✉ Eric J Buenz
Eric.Buenz@nmit.ac.nz

¹ Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, 322 Hardy Street, Nelson 7010, New Zealand