

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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STEEL SHOT PROPOSED FOR 12 GAUGE ONLY

Steel shot will be mandatory only for hunters using 12-gauge shotguns while waterfowl hunting next fall in areas designated for non-toxic shot, according to a proposed regulation change by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The amendment is intended to clarify a misunderstanding about 10-gauge guns that resulted from the Service's announcement of the 1976 regulations. The Service specifically exempted smaller-than-12-gauge shotguns from the steel shot regulations last year, but did not cover the 10 gauge in its press release. The new rule will permit use of lead shot for the 10 gauge as well as all other gauges other than 12 gauge.

Public comments addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240, received by July 20, 1977, will be considered in the final rulemaking.

The Service would prefer to provide a longer comment period. But it is necessary to obtain public comment by July 20 in order to meet an established August 1 deadline for getting final regulations to the printer in time to include the material in the 1977-78 Code of Federal Regulations.

Steel shot is the only approved non-toxic shot and it has been manufactured in 12 gauge only. Therefore the Service is proposing that in the waterfowl hunting seasons beginning in the fall of 1977, shells loaded with lead shot can be used to hunt waterfowl in steel shot zones, provided these shells are not 12 gauge.

Approximately 85 percent of all waterfowl hunters use the 12-gauge shotgun. The proposed ruling states that the hunter who is taking waterfowl in a designated steel shot zone with 12-gauge lead loads in his possession will be in violation of the regulation. Waterfowl hunters with lead loads in other gauges will not be in violation.

The Service points out that this exemption for gauges that have not been manufactured in steel shot will be reviewed again prior to the 1978 hunting seasons, but in the fall of 1979 no further exceptions will be made for lead shot in steel shot zones. These exceptions lessen the effectiveness of efforts to reduce lead poisoning among waterfowl using the zones.

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