

# Minutes of the 1st Lead Ammunition Group inaugural meeting

26 April 2010

Defra offices – London

## Attendees:

Mr John Swift - British Association of Shooting and Conservation (Chair accepted)

Dr Mark Avery – RSPB

Mr John Batley - The Gun Trade Association Ltd

Mr Stephen Crouch - National Game Dealers Association

Mr Adrian Gane - Country Land and Business Association

Mr Robert Gray - The Countryside Alliance

Dr James Kirkwood - Universities Federation for Animal Welfare

Prof. Len Levy - Institute of Environment and Health

Dr Deborah Pain - Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

Dr Stephen Tapper - Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

## Secretariat

Mr Tim Andrews - Defra (Secretary)

Ms Lucy Munro - Defra

## Guest Attendees

Dr Christina Baskaran - The Food Standards Agency (FSA)

Mr Terry Donohoe - The Food Standards Agency (FSA)

Mr Roger Quay – FERA

Mr Ashley Matthews - Defra

## 1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

## 2. Chairs introduction (Welcome and individual introductions)

John Swift agreed to be the interim Chair and his appointment was endorsed later. The Chair welcomed the Group and introductions were made. Appreciation was expressed for all those participating. It was explained how the Group was kept deliberately small but had also been constructed to include a balance of interest across sectors.

The Chair explained how participation in the Group will be challenging and will require ongoing commitment, he also highlighted to the Group that the timeframe for delivering a progress report to government is one year from this meeting.

The Group discussed the quality of emerging evidence and how best it might consider this as part of its work. The Peregrine Fund proceedings of the conference on Ingestion of Spent Lead Ammunition: Implications for Wildlife and Humans was mentioned:  
[http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead\\_conference/default.htm](http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead_conference/default.htm).

John Swift confirmed that all the main shooting organisations were committed to the principle of the Group. He sought confirmation from the Group that they supported his appointment as Chair of the Group. The Group unanimously offered their support for John's appointment as Chair.

### 3. Defra's objectives in setting up the Group

Gratitude was expressed on behalf of Defra for all those attending and agreeing to participate in this Group. The main objective for Defra in setting up the Group with the FSA was to investigate possible risks from the use of lead ammunition both for the conservation of wild birds and other species and for animal welfare.

Defra officials stated UK Government had not so far formulated conclusions in relation to the possible impacts of lead ammunition on wildlife conservation and animal welfare. Defra officials explained it will carefully consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Group in formulating its policy in this area.

A question was posed on communications with devolved administrations and whether NE and JNCC had been asked to be part of the Group. Defra officials explained that these organisations would no doubt have a role to play but that this strategic group was to be kept as small as possible. Defra would endeavour to keep the devolved administrations informed of progress. It was explained that the Group did not include government or agency participants so its conclusions and advice could be free from government intervention.

### 4. FSA's objectives in setting up the Group

FSA officials explained that there were two key objectives for setting up this Group. They are to consider:

The possible risks to humans as a result of consuming wild game and venison shot with lead ammunition

The possible risks to the food chain as a result of spent lead ammunition deposited on farm and agricultural land.

FSA officials explained that while Defra has an England only remit in terms of nature conservation policy, FSA's remit for food safety extends UK wide.

FSA officials explained the Agency is an independent UK government department and that its remit covers food safety and healthy eating. In the context of this Group, the FSA's particular concerns related to the possible impacts on food safety from lead in the environment.

The Group noted the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has now published a scientific opinion on possible health risks related to the presence of lead in food. (Post meeting note: this can be viewed at: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1570.htm>)

FSA officials pointed out that the EFSA report mentions that high consumers of game meat could have a higher than average exposure to lead.

Risk assessments have so far indicated that due to the relatively small quantities of game eaten and the relatively low levels of lead present, it is unlikely that eating game will increase exposure to lead over the long-term for the majority of the population. FSA officials indicated they are shortly to commission research in relation to patterns of consumption that the Group may wish to consider upon its publication.

The FSA are aware of a small number of incidents where animals have ingested spent lead ammunition leading to animal welfare and food safety concerns.

Two recent sources of information that may be of use in the FSA risk assessment were mentioned, one on lead concentrations in game from a study led by WWT, and one on game consumption levels from a BASC survey.

## 5. Terms of Reference/Group Aims

The Chair led detailed consideration of the draft terms of reference. The Group agreed that they are clear.

The Group agreed the Terms of Reference with minor amendments and also agreed these, once amended, would be published with the minutes of the meeting.

The Group discussed what the outputs of its work would likely be and it was confirmed that the Group have been requested to produce a written report to Defra/FSA at the end of the first year. The Group agreed to inform Defra/FSA of any key findings as they become apparent. It was also agreed the Chair will provide a single point of contact between the Group and Defra/FSA. While Defra/FSA will determine the timing of publication of the Group's progress report (so as to give officials and Ministers time to properly consider it), Defra/FSA gave a firm commitment that the advice it receives from the Group will be made public.

The Chair made it clear that any subgroups established to tackle key areas will be able to consider information from a wide range of sources providing the quality of information on which any advice to Defra/FSA is based is of a quality that would withstand independent peer review.

A question was asked as to the status of the final report and whether it would be made public. Defra/FSA officials confirmed that although Government would not be bound by any advice or recommendations contained in the final report, the report itself would be made publically available.

## 6. Working Practices/Operating Principles

The Group discussed the operating principles under which the Group would carry out its business and specifically on how decisions would be made within the Group.

It was agreed that minority views on the issues would be important and needed to be taken into account and noted, but that the Group would make decisions on a 'majority consensus basis'. Decisions made would therefore be based upon the majority view but would record where a significant minority view was also presented.

It was drawn to the Group's attention that a significant number of people within the shooting community were unconvinced about the case for a total ban of lead ammunition and the formation of the Group.

The Group agreed to operate in a way that was as open, inclusive and transparent as possible.

The Chair requested that the secretariat produce draft formal minutes within 15 working days following a meeting. The draft minutes will be circulated for comment by the Group within this period prior to being signed off by the Chair for formal publication. The aim is to have the minutes published within one month of a meeting being held. The secretariat agreed to this request.

It was agreed that these meetings should be conducted in accordance with the Chatham House Rule but that the names of attendees of the Group would, contrary to the Rule, be made public.

## 7. The use of subgroups

The Chair presented a possible model of subgroups for consideration. It was agreed that members of the main strategic group could also be involved in one or more subgroups. The Group was asked to consider the proposed model though the Chair stressed this was very much a "straw man" for discussion.

The model was based on appointing two subgroups for gathering primary evidence and producing authoritative advice on other considerations. These subgroups could provide the essential material which could be considered by subgroups covering shooting stakeholders and external inputs. Consideration might also be given to an independent subgroup to quality check advice from the main group.

It was suggested that a model based upon risk assessment would be appropriate. Another suggestion for the possible model of subgroups was to base the structure on the three strands: conservation, welfare and food safety. The Chair took comments away for consideration.

The Group therefore discussed several subgroup models and how they might interact but concluded that irrespective of the model used the primary evidence had to be gathered and a proper risk assessment carried out.

The Group identified that a subgroup dealing with deer control would likely be necessary. The Chair invited group members to make suggestions for consideration at the next meeting as to who might be best placed to lead such a subgroup.

It was noted RSPB would have an interest in this proposed subgroup as on their land they undertake a programme of deer management every year and may therefore have expertise to offer any subgroup dealing with this issue.

It was also suggested that a select committee type of system might be used where nominated experts could present evidence to the strategic group.

It was agreed that collation of "primary evidence" would be necessary as a first step.

It was agreed that primary evidence would need to cover:

1. Wildlife health and welfare – how much of a risk might lead ammunition pose?
2. Human health - how much of a risk might lead ammunition pose?
3. What broad mitigation options might there be?

A summary of the evidence base would need to be taken to the strategic group.

The Chair stressed that while the key evidence might be brought together by scientists any risk assessment based upon it must involve appropriate people from shooting disciplines and other stakeholders.

It was put to the group that risk assessments must be conducted by individuals expert in the field being assessed. It was added that this must include competent people from stakeholder groups.

In relation to the other possible subgroups identified, the Group agreed to consider these further. Thought was given to potential subgroups covering the needs and implications for the shooting disciplines.

The Chair stressed his wish for the Group in due course to consider options for the independent moderation of the Group's year-end progress report.

This being an inaugural meeting the Group reached no firm conclusions regarding how to proceed with co-ordinating these groups but it was agreed that the first step was to give consideration to gathering the key evidence on wildlife and human health. A primary evidence subgroup would be charged with the delivery of this key step. It was proposed that stakeholders from the shooting sector would offer a valuable input in the work of this subgroup. The Chair invited members to think about names for consideration at the next meeting.

It was proposed, that the evidence would be required in these distinct categories:

- UK based evidence
- International evidence
- Problems proved in the UK

The development and marketing of alternatives to lead ammunition including associated risks and performance were also key considerations to be taken into account in due course by the Group. It was agreed that consideration should be given to this aspect with a view to further discussion at the next meeting.

## 8. Communications

It was agreed that the Group would release material and statements solely through the Chair. Members agreed to refer press inquiries going beyond routine inquiry to the Chair.

It was agreed that the terms of reference for the Group should be published with the formal minutes. Action secretariat

A proposed website structure was put forward which had been developed by the BASC web team. An example layout was presented by the Chair and comments were invited. The Group agreed this facility would aid transparency, encourage external comment and would be useful for disseminating the progress of the Group.

## 9. FERA Desk Study

A FERA official presented a summary of the recent desk study undertaken by the Agency to review the evidence concerning the contamination of wildlife and the environment arising from the use of lead ammunition.

The Group agreed this presentation will be made publicly available and published on the website once it is up and running.

The Group welcomed this summary and agreed to consider its findings in detail alongside other available research.

## 10. Any other business

Appreciation was expressed for the Peregrine Fund who had made available a report for this meeting.

The publication of a paper entitled “The potential hazard to human health from exposure to fragments of lead bullets and shot in the tissues of game animals”, was mentioned and noted by the Group.

**Action All:** The Chair requested that all attendees consider who needs to be involved in subgroups.

**Action DP:** Debbie Pain agreed to contact John Harradine in order to give consideration to gathering key evidence sources on wildlife and human health so that it might be included on the website.

**Action All:** It was agreed that the Group should meet again fairly soon. The two dates proposed are 27 May pm or 28 May am for a meeting at the same venue. Group members should indicate to the secretariat their preferred date.

**Action All:** Consider models and options for sub-group structure and composition. Consider options for the independent moderation of the Group’s year-end progress report.

**Action Sec:** The secretariat was tasked with producing a Gantt chart/project plan in order to assist with setting clear milestones for this Group.