

Minutes of the 16th Lead Ammunition Group meeting/teleconference – 23rd November 2015

11am-12pm

Attendees

Mr. John Swift (Chair)
Dr. James Kirkwood - (Universities Federation for Animal Welfare)(retired)
Prof. Len Levy - (Institute of Environment and Health)
Dr. Debbie Pain - (WWT)

Secretariat

Dr. Ruth Cromie (WWT)

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from John Kilner (Defra), Sarah Hardy (FSA) and Rhys Green (RSPB).

2. Minutes of the 15th meeting on 29th September 2015

2.1 There were no comments made on the published minutes of the 15th meeting.

2.2 Matters arising from those minutes:

Action Point 12.2 To request FSA to review their guidance on consumption of game and venison in the light of the LAG risk assessments.

A number of parliamentary questions had been asked regarding risks from game consumption. Responses included references to the current consideration, by Defra and FSA, of the LAG report.

It was noted that the FSA website had been updated (on 16th October – involving some of the background text being removed) but the advice had not changed. Concern was noted that the advice is still imprecise and risks misinterpretation. As an example, as minuted from the October 2nd 2012 LAG teleconference, FSA had described the ‘occasional consumption of lead-shot game birds’ that would have minimal effect on overall exposure to lead as being ‘about twice a year’ which does not seem consistent with some circulating information.

It was noted that the human health risk assessments had been reviewed by the Committee on Toxicology, and there may be a need to review FSA’s advice to reduce lack of meaning to potentially vulnerable groups and consumers, being aware that other countries’ food safety agencies already offer more precise information to their consumers.

Action carried forward until FSA have considered the LAG report.

Action Point 13.3 Prof. Len Levy to contact Public Health England to help identify most appropriate contacts (in relation to FSA communication experts). It was felt that this was a task for FSA once the report had been accepted, rather than the LAG, but would be carried forward.

Action Point 15.1 John Kilner to determine if submission of the LAG report directly from LAG [to the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC)] would be appropriate or possible.

John Kilner had confirmed that the terms of reference of the HSAC is to 'advise officials, UK Ministers, including Ministers in the Devolved Administrations, and other relevant bodies, on request or otherwise:' thus suggesting the LAG could submit the LAG report directly to them (rather than via Defra) if that was desirable. However, given the current embargo on the report this was felt to be inappropriate at this time.

Action Point 15.2 Debbie Pain/Rhys Green to provide copies of the papers on risks to UK wildlife and human health to Defra and FSA when they are available.

Completed.

Action Point 15.3 Defra/FSA to inform LAG of progress on consideration of LAG report.

John Kilner confirmed that there was no progress to report at this stage i.e. the report was still being considered. Carried forward.

It was noted that two government petitions had been started regarding both the 'keeping of all' lead ammunition and the 'banning' of lead ammunition. At time of writing the former had had more than the required 10,000 signatures which then elicits a government response.

Action Point 15.4 Chair to find suitable meeting date for mid-November.

Completed.

3. To receive Chairman's report and progress reports from Defra and FSA

3.1 The Chair had enquired about the progress of the report's consideration by Defra and has received reassurance from Rory Stewart that Defra would be in touch once there was progress to report. It was acknowledged that Defra should be given time to consider the report although a deadline was desirable.

4. LAG website: to review visitor data

4.1 The website appeared to be continuing to serve its purpose. A recent peak in usage was likely related to the interest around the petitions and the parliamentary questions.

5. To exchange information on other related developments (future meetings and reports, including implications regarding LAG report conclusions etc.).

5.1 The AFEMS/WSFA meeting had taken place and was apparently as predicted. Dr. Steve Binks, of the International Lead Association had outlined the chemicals policy aspects of lead in ammunition.

5.2 In relation to the above, Prof. Levy informed the meeting further about the regulatory aspects of lead including the REACH process (Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) and the The Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation (CLP) that aims to ensure hazards are described and labeled, and thus dealt with, in an internationally standardised manner (to help protect humans and the environment from chemical hazards).

The issue of both 'massive lead' (i.e. lumps) and lead powder (<1mm) is of relevance to lead in game due to the fragmentation and also micronising of lead once it strikes an animal.

In terms of relevance to the LAG report conclusions, it was considered valuable to be kept informed of both the process and progress.

Action Point 16.1 Prof. Levy to inform the LAG of the current CLP and REACH processes involving metallic lead.

5.3 It was reported that the Oxford Lead Symposium proceedings were to be published imminently.

5.2 A number of other papers and reports were discussed:

- Further work on behalf of the Norwegian Food Authorities (Mattilsynet) on lead levels in minced elk supported previous work on this subject.
- A risk assessment from Canada on consumption of big game meat was supportive of the LAG conclusions.
- A report from Denmark on potential risks to the timber industry indicated no substantial harm to timber although in high quality timber forests e.g. for veneer, shooting management should take account of risks.
- A paper from WWT and Exeter University on the impact of lead poisoning on body condition of whooper swans had just been accepted for publication.

5.3 It was felt necessary to keep reviewing new literature to question whether the LAG report conclusions remained robust and were not going out of date. The question was raised whether new literature should then be posted on the LAG website. The conclusion was to post reference to new evidence/reports but it was important to ensure this was not biased one way or the other i.e. it needed to be authoritative e.g. from peer reviewed literature or government agencies advice.

Action Point 16.2 RC to investigate which of these new pieces of evidence could be posted on the LAG website (due to copyright issues etc.) and it was agreed to post those listed above where copyright permits

6. Any other business

6.1 There was a discussion about the media coverage that the issue of lead poisoning receives. When the LAG report is published there will be a need to ensure the messages, which can be complex, are made as clear as possible. Thought needs to be given to this messaging in time.

7. Date of next meeting

7.1 The Chair suggested the next meeting for the end of January.

Action Point 16.3 RC to find suitable date for next meeting.

8. Action points carried forward

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