

What will happen if Lead shot is banned?



Even though there has been no peer reviewed scientific evidence, nor a proven case against its use at clay pigeon shooting grounds, or even higher than normal lead readings in the soil, (but merely suggestions that there might be a problem), there are those who would wish to impose a Lead shot ban for clay pigeon shooting. With such a ban, the only affordable option would be the so-called ‘Steel’ shot (Iron). Unfortunately ‘Steel’ shot does not bear close scrutiny on any satisfactory performance or health and safety level, so it can never be a viable Lead replacement.

Without Lead shot, the vast majority of clay shooting clubs that stipulate the use of fibre wads, would be staring into the abyss, as there are no affordable alternatives. A great deal of these shooting grounds are in wooded areas, where the very high ricochet potential of ‘Steel’ pellets would rule out their use on health and safety grounds: this would similarly affect almost every other non-Lead pellet type.

So ‘Steel’ shot has its own list of problematic issues, not the least of which are: health and safety, ricochets, gun damage and environmental damage. So following a Lead shot ban, it would be relatively easy, on the basis of all of these issues, to put forward a strong case for an additional ban on ‘Steel’ shot pellets (at the few shooting grounds left that were able to use it); which could occur fairly quickly after Lead’s demise.

So in this worst-case scenario, the expensive alternative shot materials would be left, but even they have been found wanting with additional problems.

The new version of Bismuth, although relatively useful as a potential pellet and usable with fibre wads, has its own difficulties, such as maintaining a sufficient supply of shot. The vastly increased demand for it in fibre wadded game shooting cartridges (after a Lead shot ban), would put severe limitations on the available shot supply to load clay pigeon cartridges with it as well.

Some have incorrectly stated that a greater demand for Bismuth will lower the price. It is harder to produce Bismuth shot and as it is a by-product of Lead mining, a drop in Lead demand will raise Bismuth prices.

In the USA Tungsten based ammunition, has recently been found to have unforeseen damaging health issues.

Regardless of their relative suitability or health and safety aspects, all of these alternative pellet materials are prohibitively expensive. At today's prices, cartridges would be £1000 plus per 1000, or more than £1 a shot.

Could clay pigeon shooting survive the £25 box of cartridges?

It is obvious that in the light of this fiscal reality, all of the smaller clay pigeon shoots would simply disappear overnight, decimating the sport and the potential pool of 'Clubman' members of the CPSA.

This would leave just a tiny minority of the current numbers of (now necessarily wealthy) clay pigeon shooters who could afford the prohibitive costs involved; clay pigeon shooting would become an exclusive preserve of the very few. As an elitist, minority sport for the very wealthy, it would be very much easier to whip the urban class war warriors into a feeding frenzy; bringing about the political will to ban clay pigeon shooting altogether.

It is important to realise, that throughout the several hundred years of Lead's employment for shotgun shooting, its affects are known and we have become familiar with its use. But the true longer-term effects of the alternative new shot materials are largely unknown.