

Minutes of the 13th Lead Ammunition Group meeting - 26th May 2015

WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire (11am – 7pm)

Attendees

Dr. James Kirkwood

Prof. Len Levy

Dr. Debbie Pain

Mr. John Swift (Chair)

Secretariat

Dr. Ruth Cromie (WWT)

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from Mr. Mark Tufnell, Mr. Stephen Crouch, Mr. John Batley and Prof. Rhys Green.

1.2 It was noted that the date of the meeting had been selected due to the potential attendance of the majority of LAG members. Some members were subsequently unable to attend.

2. LAG Process

2.1 There was disappointment at recent resignations of Sir Barney White-Spunner, Mr. Mark Tufnell and Mr. Stephen Crouch.

2.2 The resignation letter from the farming and landowning representative to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had not been seen by the Group and it was felt that out of courtesy this should be provided to the Group for information and to better understand his position.

Action Point 13.1 The Chair to ask Mr. Mark Tufnell for a copy of his resignation letter to the Secretary of State.

3. Comments on the LAG report

3.1 The vast majority of the meeting was spent in discussion and full consideration of the numerous comments received on the draft of the LAG report. It was noted that it was disappointing that the senders of the comments were not present to be part of the discussion and represent their views.

Action Point 13.2 The Chair to provide feedback on comments on the draft LAG report to Mr. John Batley and Sir Barney White-Spunner (feedback to Mr. Mark Tufnell had already been provided).

4. Minutes of the 12th Meeting on June 25th 2014

4.1. There were no comments made on the published minutes of the 12th meeting.

4.2. Matters arising from those minutes

Action Point 12.1 Barney White-Spunner to recommend changes to the Code of Good Shooting Practice, which should include direct and specific recommendations on the use of non-lead shot.

No action was reported – not carried forward due to resignation from Group.

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.

Carried forward until FSA have considered the final LAG report.

Action Point 12.3 Prof Levy to seek advice on the possible interaction between iron oxide and agricultural nitrates.

Completed. Information had been provided, and the issue was not considered to be of great significance or concern.

Action Point 12.4 Sir Barney to distribute to the group a 1996 report on ricochet of steel shot conducted by the Royal College of Military Science and commissioned by the Birmingham Proof House.

Completed. A report by Roger Hancox from the Birmingham Proof House had been provided and considered within the report. A separate 1996 report (Giblin and Compton 1996) from the Shrivenham Royal Military College of Science on ballistic properties of non-toxic shot was no longer publicly available however its main findings had been cited within the LAG report.

Action Point 12.5 PERA Subgroup to establish a consistent approach to scoring risks before mitigation and complete that part of the Register for reporting back to the Group.

Completed and formed the basis of the Risk Register.

Action Point 12.6 All to submit any further possible mitigation options to the Mitigation Subgroup.

The Group was not aware of any additional options received.

Action Point 12.7 Mitigation Subgroup to develop mitigation action plans for measures already discussed.

No progress was reported and the Group had not received any.

Action Point 12.8 Chairman to circulate draft proposal for lead forum for comment.

Completed. The proposal had not been supported by a number of members of the LAG and the forum did not take place. Many of the issues that would have been covered at a lead forum were discussed at an independently run scientific symposium in December 2014 (the Oxford Lead Symposium).

5. Significant comments on draft LAG report circulated 10th April 2015

5.1 In light of the comments received, the following areas of the draft LAG report were discussed:

a. *The key risks to wildlife (as in the consensus statement)*

No new or additional evidence had been submitted which affected the report's conclusions on level and scale of risks to wildlife.

b. *The respective levels of those risks in short medium and long term (as set out in the risk assessments, the draft report and relevant appendices)*

As above, no new or additional evidence had been provided which materially changed the levels of risks within the report, risk assessments or other appendices.

c. *Possible solutions to any significant risks (as in the relevant sections of the draft report and Register).*

There was a discussion on the need to involve strategic communications experts.

Action Point 13.3 Prof. Len Levy to contact Public Health England to help identify most appropriate contacts (checking with FSA to confirm this is the correct procedure).

d. *Possible options for managing the risk to human health from increased exposure to lead as the result of using lead ammunition; notably in terms of food safety, including game shot with lead and spent lead shot on agricultural land*

No additional options for managing these risks had been provided.

e. *Significant knowledge gaps that may hinder the identification or assessment of risks, the development of technical solutions or the development of government policy (as set out in the risk assessments and report sections dealing with knowledge gaps and uncertainties)*

It was agreed that further contact with the gun trade representative would be valuable. (Post meeting note. John Batley resigned having been invited to comment further.)

Action Point 13.4 The Chair to contact Mr. John Batley to be kept abreast of technical issues.

f. Communication issues, and possible solutions, concerning the relaying of balanced information on issues surrounding the use of lead ammunition to the media, general public and stakeholders (as in relevant mitigation sections)

It was made clear that once the report is submitted to the Secretary of State, Defra and FSA must be given time to consider its findings and during this time there was an expectation of confidentiality from the LAG. Defra will be aware, from letters from a small number of the LAG shooting stakeholders (plus possibly articles in the shooting press) that there have been recent suggestions that the LAG process is flawed. How Defra will respond to that is not known.

It was agreed and strongly felt that the complete LAG findings should be made public relatively soon as there was interest in the LAG outputs (both from the UK and overseas). If it was not possible to do this within a short timeframe there was a suggestion that although the main report would likely be used for consideration of potential policy development, the risk assessments were bodies of scientific work, much of which was already in the public domain, so could likely be made available more quickly.

g. Significant impacts of possible advice or solutions on shooting activity and associated recreational, wildlife management, economic and employment impacts (as in relevant mitigation sections).

Comments received from the gun trade representative had been valuable, but again no new evidence of significant negative impacts on the above had been provided.

6. Any other matters raised by comments received

6.1 It was noted that despite the recent resignations all comments on the draft LAG report had been fully considered. Again there was a strong sentiment that those who attended this meeting would welcome the chance to clarify some of the comments made even though resignations had been made ahead of dealing with the comments.

7. Next steps and date of next meeting

7.1 The Chair asked the remaining LAG members about the future of the LAG. There was a discussion about the main purpose of LAG having been completed but that there was still a need for a body to remain in contact with Defra and FSA.

7.2 The next step was for the Chair to complete the last small amendments to the report and prepare a final draft including appendices which would then be submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Mrs. Elizabeth Truss.

Action Point 13.5 The Chair to complete the LAG report and submit to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

7.3 Given the resignations and articles in the shooting media, the Chair sought views on confidence in the Chair of the Group continuing in that role. It was noted that the LAG process had taken longer than had been anticipated. However, the members present unanimously expressed confidence in the Chair, and support for the Chair's continuation in that role. It was agreed that the Chair had had a very difficult task in managing the LAG process over the five years and balancing what were sometimes very polarised views.

Action Point 13.6 Prof. Len Levy to write short note to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in support of the even-handed role played by the Chair.

7.4 In summary, the final report had taken some six months to near completion and although there had been resistance from shooting representatives to its conclusions it was felt that no substantial evidence had been provided which had materially changed these.

8. Any other business

8.1. No other business was brought to the Group.

9. Action points carried forward

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.

Carried forward until FSA have considered the final LAG report.

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