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# Los Angeles Times

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## Getting the lead out of ammo

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By The Times editorial board  
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**Even tiny amounts of lead are toxic. Banning lead ammunition in California would go far in protecting both animals and humans.**

A bill before the California Assembly would outlaw the use of lead ammunition by hunters. There is already a federal prohibition on its use in hunting waterfowl, and in 2007 the state banned it in the range of the endangered California condor.

AB 711, written by Assemblymen Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) and Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), would take these restrictions a step further in an effort to safeguard animals as well as the environment. Lead pellets in shotgun shells, typically used to shoot birds, spray across land and water. (Under some conditions, lead dissolves in water or infiltrates groundwater.) Lead bullets, used commonly to hunt big-game mammals, fragment into hundreds of shards upon impact. Hunters who field dress their kills leave behind the carcasses — often full of lead fragments — that are then ingested by scavenging birds and mammals, among them coyotes, raccoons and pumas.

Even tiny amounts of lead are toxic, and there is no safe level for humans, which is why it's been removed from most paint,



Anthony Prieto, an avid hunter, is a key person in Project Gutpile, an informal effort to spread the word on using non-lead bullets. Prieto is seen here holding a non-lead bullet, left, and a standard lead bullet. Both work equally well, only the one on the right is toxic to scavengers and predators. (Los Angeles Times )

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gasoline, children's toys and other products. The National Park Service reports on its website that studies have shown that wild game meat consumed by humans can sometimes be tainted with lead as well.

And even with the ban on using lead ammunition in condor habitats, the birds continue to be endangered by it, partly because hunters don't always follow the law and partly because condors sometimes stray outside their normal range.

The bill would also ban the use of lead ammunition on private property to kill nuisance or sick animals, the remains of which are also often left out for other animals to consume.

In the past, non-lead ammunition, made of copper or steel, was more expensive than lead bullets and shells. But as more hunters have begun to use non-lead ammunition, prices have come down and non-lead ammunition can be found comparably priced to lead ammunition. AB 711 would be phased in over two years to mitigate the economic concerns of retailers and hunters who may have stocked up on lead ammunition.

This bill is sponsored by a trio of animal and environmental protection organizations — the Humane Society of the United States, Defenders of Wildlife and Audubon California — but this is not a measure aimed at curbing the sport of hunting. It would protect animals and people — including those people who hunt and eat their kill — by lessening their exposure to lead.