

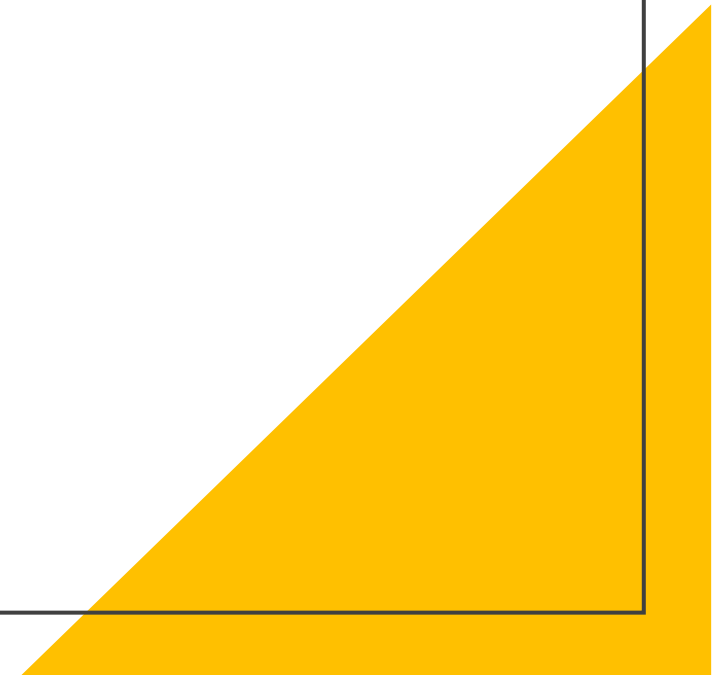
Ensuring wildlife is not
harmed by lead:
Lessons & Reflections from the
South African Lead Task Team



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MEFT Lead Awareness Workshop, 27 Feb 2024



What is the South African Lead Task Team?

- Established 2019 by SA government as a sub-group of the National Wildlife Poisoning Prevention Working Group (NWPPWG)
 - In response to the overwhelming evidence that lead is in the food chain and harming wildlife
- Vision of the LTT is to **ensure that wildlife is not harmed by exposure to lead**, and Mandate to **identify and implements key actions to understand and reduce the risk**
- Composition
 - Mix of conservation NGOs, government, academics and user associations representing angling and hunting; plus youth
 - Maintain balance
 - Wildlife rehabilitation sector
- 3 mtgs/yr, virtual
- Decisions by consensus
- Sub-committees

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LEAD TASK TEAM

South Africa



24 members
17 organisations



What has worked



- Formal committee established by government
 - Gravitas
 - Input into many strategies
[Vulture BMP; Lead & Cadmium Strategy; Lead Exposure Prevention Strategy; Game Meat Strategy; BV Recovery Strategy; etc.]
 - Report formally into other committees
[BVTF, Vulture Task Force; NWPPWG; etc]
 - Comment into national and international processes
[AEWA; CMS; EU lead restrictions]
- Sub-committees
 - Communications
 - Alternative ammunition
- Passionate membership

What hasn't worked so well



- Large, long-term process, not a short-term project
 - Progress too slow
 - Behind in many areas of the strategy, including engagement with key role-players
 - No budget
 - No dedicated human resources, incl secretariat
- Government
 - Restrictions on documents and web sites
 - Restrictions on communication
 - Chair succession planning
- Baseline pre-intervention monitoring not in place
 - No national or regional database of raw data or metadata
 - No budget for collecting data (yet)

Approach (1)

- Awareness before Action
 - Must know about the issue before being asked to change
 - Legislation won't work on its own
 - Voluntary transition
- Language
 - Lead is the problem, not hunters
 - Don't use the word 'ban'
- Time-bound Strategy
- Emphasise human health risk
 - Speaks to things that people care about – their children, their health
 - Health regulations will incentivize the change
- Use criticism or comments and denial of evidence as an opportunity to educate and engage
- Alternatives
 - Local production, lower cost
 - Demand – Supply - Price

Approach (2)

- Influentials, testimonials
 - More effective than hearing from a 'scientist' or a 'greenie'
- Battle of the Bullets
- Repeat (some) international studies
- Frame actions in terms of economic theory
 - Supply-demand; market certainty
- Non-environmental legislation
 - Health and Consumer Protection
 - Product labeling, e.g.:
 - Biltong/boerewors - "This product may contain lead"
 - Ammunition - "Lead is harmful to your health and that of unborn children"
 - Gun shops - Point of sale awareness
 - Availability of alternatives at gun shops
- Listen. Understand. Then speak.

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Challenges (1)

- Need a funded, full-time position
 - At least for the next 5 years; SADC-wide?
- Sustained communication and messaging, not start-stop
 - Dedicated communications person/company with targets and monitoring of reach
- Ensuring action while trying to bring stakeholders along
 - Can't get caught in perpetual talking
- Attack on individuals
 - Social media
- Multi-sectoral issue, cross-cutting
 - Revenue Services, Customs, Police, Health, Environment

Challenges (2)

- “Silent killer”, “Out of sight, out of mind” – impact underestimated
 - “Poisoning and Muthi trade are much bigger issues, why aren’t you dealing with those”
- Population level impacts (evidence thereof) vs individual animal suffering – ethics
 - Challenge the ‘Hunters are conservationists’ mantra
- Seen as an attack on hunting
 - The message is not heard
 - Straight to implications, not hearing the science
 - Ironical that a transition to lead-free will help sustain hunting into the future; failure to change is a threat to the industry
- Natural experiments/monitoring can only go so far; need experimental research, esp for non-lethal impacts
 - Ethical clearance; consequentialism

Gaps

- Quantifying skinner/farm worker/protected area neighbour lead exposure
- Lead exposure of hunters, their families and pets
- Quantification of the amount and distribution of lead discharged into the environment
 - Wingshooting
 - Game hunting
 - Wildlife management (PAC, culling)
 - Fishing sinkers and tackle
- Knowledge gaps
 - Marine environment (fishing sinkers)
 - Gamebird pathway
 - Pigeons-Falcons?
 - Guineafowl/francolin-Raptors?
 - Lead shot-Cranes/gamebirds?
 - Specimen angling
 - Maggot pathway?
- FAQs

Thanks



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