



Above: A copper bullet hitting milk jugs. Inset below: Barnes copper triple shock bullet, left, and Barnes tipped triple shock, right.

BULLET

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“Even skeptical folks are coming in and it’s opening their eyes about how much lead fragments,” Windels said.

Concern about the effect of lead bullets on wildlife and humans is not new, Windels said. The society’s interest in the issue surrounds secondary lead poisoning of wildlife, he said. Lead has been blamed for the deaths of bald eagles, as well as crows and ravens, that suffer lead poisoning after eating the carcasses of deer killed with lead bullets.

He said there has long been great concern about lead poisoning in humans. Knowing children develop nervous system problems after ingesting lead is the reason the nation has banned lead in paint.

A lot of research has been conducted about the potential health impacts on humans who may eat lead fragments contained in venison harvested with lead bullets, he said.

“That’s one of the reasons I switched, in addition to the wildlife effects — I didn’t want to feed my kid lead fragments,” he said.

Hunters can switch to non-lead bullets and reduce the negative impacts on wildlife and humans without impacting their hunting experience, he said.

He said a lot of hunters take for granted a clean killing shot in the lung of a deer, but he said tiny fragments of lead still end up in the muscle. Many of those fragments won’t end up being found and removed from venison as it is butchered.

Reading about an alternative to lead ammunition may not be convincing some

If you go

What: Copper bullet demonstration
When: 2-5 p.m. Oct. 19
Where: Littlefork Gun Club: Three miles south of Littlefork off County Road 77
Questions: Steve Windels, president, Minnesota Chapter, The Wildlife Society, 283-9926



hunters to give it a try, he said. Instead, Windels said the society wants to show hunters lead can be a good choice when it comes to hunting.

Windels said the Oct. 19 demonstration will allow hunters to compare the lead bullets they bring with them with copper bullets provided by the society. Hunters will be encouraged to shoot their lead bullets into bullet traps, which filter out the fragments and illustrate how fragments would travel inside a live animal.

Then the society will provide copper bullets of the same caliber to shoot into the traps to compare to the lead fragments. He said copper bullets will be available for free in the most common calibers and most hunters will find a copper alternative to the lead bullets they use.

Hunters will also be encouraged to shoot at targets to compare the accuracy of copper to lead bullets, he said.

“For a lot of folks, the first time they tried it, they changed their mind,” he said.

Seeing was believing for even Windels, a wildlife biologist at Voyageurs National Park, who had switched to copper bullets about two years ago.

“At that first workshop in August, even though I had seen pictures and knew

what we were expecting, to see it first-hand was surprising to me,” he said.

The Wildlife Society’s state chapter is offering the demonstrations because the issue is being discussed by some state officials and in media reports. Some states, including California, are passing laws intended to phase out the use of lead ammunition, while other states are encouraging a voluntary program to give hunters the chance to be proactive, Windels said.

“The personal choice generally comes down to hunters are concerned ballistically whether copper performs the same as lead,” he said.

Windels admitted copper bullets may be more difficult to find than lead because the market is not able to keep up with the demand, and in some places copper bullets in the desired caliber may difficult to find.

“But when the demand is there, manufacturers will find a way to meet demand — no doubt,” he said.

The cost difference between lead and copper ammunition should not be a factor when the big picture is considered.

“You spend \$40 for copper bullets and only shoot a handful a year,” he said. “So you spend an extra \$1 or \$2 per year. That’s minor compared to all the things deer hunters spend money on.”

PUMPKIN SUCCESS



Children and their families return to the farm last Saturday after picking their pumpkins.

BOARD

➤ continued from A1

The county would also need to find out how to pay for the new road, Sutherland said. If the county designated the new road as a county state aid highway, it would have to remove that designation from another road in the county.

There’s also the idea of installing a flashing yellow light at the intersection of County Road 20 and Highway 11, Sutherland said. The light would warn drivers of a crossing blocked by a train in downtown Ranier, so drivers would be able to continue on to the current bypass road, County Road 131.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck said the rail traffic is going to continue to increase, and the crossing blockages in Ranier will continue to grow. The blocked crossing is choking off the north side of the city, he said.

“We’ve had three businesses close there, just in the last few years,” Pavleck said. “Was it all due to the railroad? I don’t know, but it certainly didn’t help.”

The road being blocked is a county road, Pavleck said, so the county has a responsibility to make sure citizens have a bypass route in and out of Ranier.

“For the sake of Ranier, we can’t leave it the way it is,” Pavleck said.

Commissioner Kevin Adee, who lives on Van Lynn Road, also known as County Road 24, said he can’t support the addition of a bypass road in the proposed location. The Van Lynn Road is often blocked by train traffic, he said, and residents have no ac-

cess to an existing bypass road.

“They have a half-mile down the road that they can go to bypass the train,” Adee said. “We don’t have that option.”

There is a rail access road that can be used, Adee said, but he doubts whether an ambulance or a tanker truck could make it down the road.

Adee said he opposed the idea of another bypass road because of the cost to the county to construct it, and the lack of options for Van Lynn residents.

“I don’t believe that it’s in the best interest of Koochi-ching County,” Adee said. “I’ve got 50 homes on the east side of the Van Lynn Road, if I supported this, they’re going to be asking me why I supported that.”

In other business, the board approved a motion to remove some language from an existing ordinance outlining quarrying, mining, and gravel pit operations in the county.

County Environmental Services Director Dale Olson said the language is too burdensome for county staff to enforce, and could cause problems in the future for companies which want to undertake smaller operations.

The ordinance was adopted in 1975, and some operations were grandfathered in to the ordinance, so the removed language doesn’t apply to them, Olson said. Even if the language was left in, he said, county officials wouldn’t be able to negate the impact these operations have had.

“No matter what we do, we can’t change what has already been done,” Olson said.

Any changes wouldn’t

affect the conditional use pattern the county already uses for blasting, Olson said, which includes pre-blast surveys and notifications to any home within one half of a mile of the quarry. There are no homes within that distance from of the quarries in question, owned by Bowman Construction, he said.

Taking out the language simplifies things, county Administrative Director Teresa Briggs said, because county officials can’t enforce the language on grandfathered in operations anyway.

“Whether you do nothing or you take it out, you’re still honoring your grandfathered in quarries,” Briggs said. “But you’re not going to continue to be faced with people bringing that language in front of you.”

Debbie Bowman of Bowman Construction said the company blasts at its quarry site four to six times per year during the blasting season, which is during the non-winter months. The blasting is done by Viking Explosive and Supply Inc. from Hibbing, she said, and “they’re experts in the state, they know what they’re doing.”

The size of the blast charge doesn’t change, Bowman said, and weather patterns can affect how much the blast is felt, as well as how loud it is. As a courtesy, the company notifies the sheriff’s office on the days the company blasts, she said.

Commissioner Wayne Skoe said while county officials get some complaints about the blasting, he also has people tell him how they have no problems with it.

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