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Dedicated to the Conservation,  
Protection and Restoration  
of Our Game and Fish and to the  
Education of Our People  
to the Value of Our Natural Resources

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When your deer is checked by biologists at the check station, what they find helps maintain a well balanced deer herd and good hunting.

Front Cover—Deer hunter Paul Rowe of Columbia and some of his hounds on a hunt earlier this year near Ridgeland. Many times deer will instinctively head for water when being trailed, a trait the wise hunter will remember. Photo by Darrell Holt.

Inside Front Cover—A foggy fall morning on the Savannah River has a beauty all its own, while a dim sun offers a promise of the day to come. Photo by John Culler.



# IRON SHOT FOR DUCKS?

SINCE 1965 when the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife announced that waterfowl losses caused by lead poisoning might shorten duck hunting seasons or force bag limit reductions, leading American and Canadian ammunition manufacturers have been trying to find a non-toxic substitute for lead in waterfowl shotshells.

BSFW statistics still indicate ducks, geese, and swans feeding in shallow water are poisoned by some 6,000 tons of lead shot which accumulate in U. S. wetlands each year. After checking lead shotshell ammunition stocks in local sporting good stores, you might think that five years of trying was to no avail, but you'd be wrong.

An alternative to this lead poisoning has, in fact, been found. But the conclu-





sion of several years of research, recommending soft iron as the only feasible substitute for lead in shotshells has not left the lead-oriented ammunition manufacturers particularly overjoyed.

The research project—financed by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers (SAAMI), (the trade association of the ammunition and firearms producers) and conducted at the Illinois Institute of Technology—failed to produce any of the non-toxic lead modifications SAAMI was eagerly waiting for. SAAMI has since been none too eager in picking up IIT's iron recommendation and running with it.

So iron was put on the line.

Tests at the BSW's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland proved that shotshells with one ounce of No. 4 soft iron shot were almost identical "killing effectiveness" as

comparable lead loads at "in-range" shots not exceeding fifty yards. In terms of shot-crippled birds, the tests indicated no appreciable difference between experimental iron shotshells and comparable lead loads.

As for its effect on a shotgun, SAAMI's own tests last year revealed negligible gun barrel wear after 1000 test rounds of soft iron shot. There was increasing support for iron pellets in waterfowl shotshells, SAAMI said, evaluation of data would continue and final technical reports were forthcoming. Precious little has been heard from SAAMI since.

Assuming no news was good news, BSW Director John S. Gottschalk (who will soon join NOAA, the new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) announced during the August, 1970 waterfowl advisory meeting in Washington, D. C., that iron shotshells would hopefully be available to waterfowl hunters within a year and a half. SAAMI quickly responded that this didn't look so likely, that iron shotshells were on the horizon but not yet in hand.

Whether SAAMI is indeed anxious to get iron shotshells into their hands is questionable. Two or more companies in New England have already suggested they can produce soft iron shot. But with a squeaky-tight economy and a general dislike of depending on production contracts outside the ammunition manufacturing industry, SAAMI might at present be walking an economic tight rope between its environmentally concerned four-color ad and its not-to-be-forgotten stockholders.

In any case, SAAMI would do well to consider carefully just how far out on the horizon iron shot really is. It might consider, for example, in terms of hunter recreation hours, spent shotgun shells, and its "environmental decade" image, the economic ramifications of saving an estimated one million waterfowl lost each year due to lead shot poisoning.

In the end, it is this kind of consideration that may put iron shotshells in the guns of duck hunters where they belong.