



Of Great Britain & Northern Ireland

FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE FIREARMS LEGISLATION



Quarterly Newsletter 30/06/2021

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Hello Everyone,

I hope you have all been able to get back to some of your favourite activities, even if there are still some restrictions in place. Or you at least have some dates in the diary for events later this year.

My son and I have just started back at our indoor range and we're pleased to have proved to ourselves that we can still shoot straight, although with such a long break our arms are a bit sore!

Which brings me to current opening hours of the association. I am gyming and swimming first thing every morning to regain my physical fitness after the lockdowns. This means my working day does not start until 10.00. I am also juggling more than one job, so please leave a message with a telephone number I can call you back on if I am not able to answer your call straight away, I am quite good at returning missed calls.

Similarly at weekends, my diary is beginning to fill up with range dates and when officiating I am not able to answer the phone, but will call you back during the week.

AGM

Due to the continued restrictions this has been postponed again until October 16th, during the Trafalgar Meeting. Hopefully the NRA will have a trade show, and spectators will finally be allowed on the ranges, and clubhouses will be open for accommodation and catering. Positive thinking everyone.

Medcert

Some members have been using Medcert during lockdown because of difficulties accessing their GP, or dramatically increased charges from the GP. Just to let you know, Medcert have increased their charges to £60 per online application, and £62.50 if you use their paper application form.

MedCert can be contacted via www.medcert.co.uk, or for those without internet at:

MedCert, Zinc Building, Great Stoney, Chipping Ongar, Essex, CM5 OAD
Tel. 020 8063 4503

Discount for SA Members of 10% using code SA1996

Transfer of Medical Records to NHS Digital

At the beginning of June, I emailed Graham Downing (Secretary BSSC) asking whether the BSSC had been notified, or involved in discussions, re the impending transfer, in early July, of medical records from GPs to NHS Digital. As announced by the then health secretary Matt Hancock at the beginning of April. My concern being the security of medical markers for FAC and SGC holders, as well as RFD's.

Graham's response was "*We have been neither consulted or notified of this change, and I will raise the matter with both the Home Office and NPCC (National Police Chiefs Council). It is unrealistic to expect 600,000 certificate holders to opt out. My intention is to find out what measures the Home Office has put in place to ensure security of the firearms marker.*"

I am unaware at this point whether Graham has had a response to his enquiries, but my understanding in June was this.

The medical history of every person in England will be copied across from their GP to NHS Digital. The identity of the patients is to be encoded before the records are made available to academic and commercial third parties for research and planning purposes.

However, the coding of the patient's identity can be reversed if a valid legal reason is given, and since records will include mental and sexual health data, potentially criminal records, and other sensitive information, including possibly medical markers for FAC/SGC/RFD holders there are grave concerns about just how many people should have access to information which should be very restricted for security reasons.

The security of the medical marker was discussed at a meeting between Home Office, Police, Medical and Shooting Representatives in June 2020:

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Shooting and Conservation) said that once a marker is on the medical record, then the record must not leak to other individuals. Otherwise, the certificate holder could be targeted by those who want to obtain firearms. Jo Churchill (Health Minister) responded by saying that the challenge was to make the marker visible to some parts of the system and invisible to others. (Could possibly take upto another 2 years to get the IT right throughout the NHS.)

My own GP surgery were very responsive but could not get any answers as to whether the medical marker would be part of the data transfer or not.

This data transfer has now been delayed to 1st September 2021, giving you a bit more time to opt out should you be concerned. You can opt out at any time after

1/9/21, but any data already transferred will not be returned.

There are two types of opt out. Type 1 is the important one for now. Please use the following links for more information, and the opt out form:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-collections/general-practice-data-for-planning-and-research#opting-out>

[Opt-out-Form.pdf \(theorchardsurgery.nhs.uk\)](#)

Debate on Grouse Shooting 21/6/21

Wild Justice started a petition to ban Grouse shooting in 2019, which was signed by 111,965 people (11,114 fewer people than signed the petition in 2016), leading to a debate at Westminster. This issue was debated in October 2016, and essentially the views on both sides of the argument have not changed.

Prior to the debate Country Side Alliance and Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust provided scientifically based briefing papers to MP's and journalists. Both are available online.

During the debate the majority of MP's who spoke were against a ban and in full support of the rural economies and the people who care for and work in the countryside.

To read the debate in full please use the following link and scroll down to Westminster Hall debates:

[House of Commons - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

National Game Dealers Association Statement on Lead Free Ammunition.

At the National Game Dealers Association (NGDA) annual general meeting members voted to commit to sourcing all feather and fur Game as well as venison and wild boar from lead free supply chains from the 1st of July 2022.

This was agreed in order to future proof the sale of Game meat in their customers businesses, and to ensure continued consumer growth from those people seeking to enjoy our healthy delicious game products. This is a positive move for our industry to protect the environment and further assure our products in a highly competitive market place. The NGDA and its members will be working with the relevant industry groups to ensure, with this notice, our supply chains are able to make a transition.

If you have any concerns as a supplier to an NGDA member, please discuss your individual requirements with them or the NGDA

Industry Update on Steel Shot Cartridge Manufacture

A briefing from the GTA and cartridge manufacturers on the current situation with regard to the manufacture and development of steel shot cartridges has been circulated via BSSC. I will try and summarise for you.

The industry is still committed to working towards the 5-year transition period proposed by the live-quarry shooting organisations in 2020. However, there are difficult challenges in the manufacturing process to be overcome.

Steel (soft iron) loaded cartridges are seen as the only mass-market, cost effective alternative, and it is thought this will comprise 95% of most future game shooting.

Global supply chain disruption and material shortages due to Covid-19 restrictions are unlikely to be resolved in the next 2-3 years. In the UK component availability is affecting manufacture of current products, let alone the development of new ones.

China is the biggest supplier of steel shot for ammunition, and there is currently a global shortage with a 40% reduction in supply over the past 3 years. In part it is because steel shot takes longer to form than lead shot, 5 times longer. It also takes much longer to ship from China, than from UK or Europe. Shipping costs have increased by 500% over the last year. The Chinese have also closed factories that do not meet the new strict air pollution laws, again increasing costs.

The industry is looking for new sources of supply. However, competition for limited supplies is stiff, compounded by the increasing EU restrictions on lead.

Steel shot is not only hard on barrels, it is hard on the machinery used to load cartridges, so production lines are having to be upgraded or replaced with stronger machinery. The loading process is also slower, because of the hardness of the steel. This requires huge investment at a time when the industry has seen massive reductions in profits as a result of the pandemic.

Completely different powders are required for steel shot, and there are only a few companies in the EU who manufacture this, and only in small quantities. UK manufacturers are dependent on these companies investing in order to increase production, but they too have suffered financially due to the pandemic.

Finally, the industry only has limited availability of non-plastic degradable wads, this will change in time with further development and investment.

In conclusion, whilst the industry remains committed to the voluntary transition to non lead, plastic free cartridges, the wider game industry needs to be realistic about the time needed to achieve this.

UK Proposals to Phase Out Lead Ammunition in Bid to Protect Wildlife

On 23/3/2021 DEFRA announced the following plans to phase out lead ammunition in a bid to protect wildlife.

“We (DEFRA) are considering restrictions under the UK’s new chemical regulation system, UK REACH. We have requested an official review of the evidence to begin today and will launch a public consultation in due course.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said: “Addressing the impacts of lead ammunition will mark a significant step forward in helping to protect wildlife, people and the environment. This is a welcome development for our new chemicals framework, and will help ensure a sustainable relationship between shooting and conservation.”

Dr Julia Newth, Ecosystem Health & Social Dimensions Manager at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), said: “Conservationists, including WWT, shooting organisations and game meat retailers have recognised the toxic risks from lead ammunition to people and the environment. Regulation of its use in all shooting, wherever this may happen, is very much needed as soon as possible to protect human and animal health to enable us to move towards a greener and safer future.”

The Environment Agency, together with the Health and Safety Executive, will now start a two-year process to review the evidence, conduct a public consultation and propose options for restrictions.

UK REACH allows decisions to be made on the regulation of chemicals based on the best available scientific evidence, ensuring chemicals remain safely used and managed. (UK REACH is a post Brexit organisation to replace the EU REACH organisation.)

Member organisations of the BSSC have started work on this, much of which I can not go into at this point in time. With regard to live quarry shooting, since there is already a move to transition to non-lead shot, and that game dealers are pushing for that too, and that the NI Protocol means NI is subject to EU law, combined with the science relied on to back up the transition to non-lead shot presented by WWT, there is a feeling that challenging this is futile.

Efforts should perhaps be concentrated on derogations for target shooting, rifle, pistol, airgun, muzzle loading, where non-lead ammunition is not available or suitable and can be retained.

More information at the following links:

<http://www.oxfordleadsymposium.info/>

<http://www.leadammunitiongroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Executive-Summary>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqHmB6o5EHQ>

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/opinion/echa-report-on-lead-ammunition-near-total-ban-starting-off-on-the-wrong-foot-once-again>

Change of UN Classification of Hodgdon Triple 7 Powder & Pellets

The UN classification of Hodgdon Triple 7 powder and pellets changed in 2020 and you now need an Explosive Licence to purchase and hold this particular black powder substitute. It’s chemical base is a glucose compound unlike the nitrocellulose based smokeless powders, hence the change. The extract below was posted online by an RFD.

Just received this from my firearms certification department.

“Hello, I write in relation to Hodgdon Triple 7 powder and pellets.

Enquiries reveal that Hodgdon Triple powder and pellets have the explosive UN numbers of 0499 or 0501 – these numbers are not listed as exempt from having an explosive certificate under schedule 2 of the Explosive Regulations 2014. This means that to sell this product you need to have an explosives acquire and keep (A/K) certificate with 0499 & 0501 listed, and to purchase from you, your customer needs a valid explosives acquire and keep (A/K) certificate with UN 0499 and 0501 listed.

I have conducted further enquiries with the Regional Explosive Lead and have been advised that unlike black powder there is no requirement for this propellant to be stored in a wooden box.

It is unknown as to whether there has been a recent change in the mixture of the powder/pellets which has led to it now being classified as either 04999 or 0501. I have notified the HSE of this matter and they will be contacting the importer and conducting further enquiries however, it may be some time before we receive a response from them.

In the meantime if you sell Hodgdon Triple Seven and have been issued with an A/K explosive certificate please return the certificate to Firearms Licensing for update (no fee). If you do not currently have an A/K certificate and sell Triple Seven then you will need to apply for a certificate and pay the relevant fee.

Please advise any potential customer(s) that they need to apply for an explosives A/K certificate from the Licensing department from where they reside before they can purchase the pellets/powder (no fee).

Henry Krank has a very informative online section on powders, BP/BP Substitute and Nitro Smokeless Powders. It details the UN classifications and necessary licences needed for all of them, so highly recommend reading at:

<https://www.henrykrank.com/blog/ordering-powder-what-licenses-you-need-and-why.html>

Thanks to Member Richard Calver for bringing this to our attention.

Tokyo Olympics & Japanese Firearms Law

The Tokyo Olympics have been rescheduled for 23rd July to 8th August 2021. We have 5 competitors shooting rifle and shotgun in the Olympics, and seven shooting rifle, shotgun and pistol in the Para Olympics. Our best wishes to all of them.

Now we talk about having very strict firearms laws, but the Japanese laws are even more restrictive, and this has had an impact on the shooting events at the Olympics.

The Japanese NRA have had to negotiate with the police and government to enable Technical Officials to handle competitors' firearms as per ISSF rules, i.e., in equipment control, random trigger tests and malfunctions etc. Also, coaches are only able to make small repairs to a competitor's firearm so long as the competitor remains holding the firearm. That is going to make adjusting triggers interesting. Japanese law only allows possession of 800 rounds of ammunition, nowhere near enough for a competitor to complete all the training, qualifying and finals that take place at such a competition.

There will be ammunition available for purchase at the venue, once you have shot your 800 rounds, and handed in the empty cases as proof, but this will not necessarily suit your firearm as most top athletes match batches of ammunition to their gun. Athletes are able to import their own personal ammunition, which will be held outside the venue and can be brought in once the athlete has used up their permitted 800 rounds.

I have written a much too long history of Japanese firearms law, and may put it on the website. But to say restrictions on private ownership of firearms in Japan were first brought in 1588, by a former peasant who had risen through the ranks and finished the unification of Japan's feudal states started by Lord Nobunaga. They won by arming their peasant armies with muskets, to devastating effect, and then banned ownership of swords and firearms by the un-noble to maintain control.

Things to Potentially Look Forward to This year:

The Game Fair 2021 - 23-25 July Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

<https://www.thegamefair.org>

South Yorkshire Shooting Show - 25th & 26th September 2021

<https://www.southyorkshireshootingshow.com>

Target Shooting Show – 20/21st November Stoneleigh Park

<https://www.targetshootingshow.co.uk>

Do let me know of any events you would like advertised.

Keep on keeping well,
Rachel Westlake.