



Cooperative National Dove Hunter Survey



Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT THE SURVEY -

What is the Cooperative National Dove Hunter Survey (National Dove Hunter Survey)?

The Cooperative National Dove Hunter Survey is the first report of its kind to gather national-level information on dove hunter behaviors and attitudes in order to help sustain dove hunting for the long-term. Although several states have conducted similar surveys, their survey methodology and questions have differed, so results have not been directly comparable on such a scale to provide the big picture.

What is the goal of the National Dove Hunter Survey?

Hunter opinions and preferences are important and should be taken into account whenever possible. The resulting survey data about dove hunters' motivations and their perceptions will help state and federal wildlife and natural resources managers make informed decisions concerning the regulation process, education programs and species management to ultimately improve the conservation of the nation's migratory bird resources in the future.

What did the National Dove Hunter Survey study?

Consisting of 26 questions, the Cooperative National Dove Hunter Survey focused on learning more about dove hunter characteristics; dove hunters' time spent hunting; perceived constraints to hunting; and attitudes and opinions about potential effects of spent lead from hunting ammunition on mourning doves and other wildlife.

Why focus on dove hunters?

Mourning doves are one of the most abundant and widely distributed game birds in the country. Each year, approximately one million dove hunters spend more than three million days afield and harvest between 15-20 million mourning doves. There are dove hunting seasons established in 40 of the lower 48 states.

Who conducted the National Dove Hunter Survey?

The National Dove Hunter Survey was produced jointly by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ([fws.gov](https://www.fws.gov)), the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies ([fishwildlife.org](https://www.fishwildlife.org)) and the National Flyway Council ([flyways.us](https://www.flyways.us)). Special recognition is due to the Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyway Councils and Technical Committees for their technical assistance and financial support.

Photo by George Andrejko, AZGFD

How was the National Dove Hunter Survey distributed?

In June 2013, the National Dove Hunter Survey was sent to randomly selected hunters, drawn from the Harvest Information Program (HIP) database, in the 40 states with dove hunting seasons. The large sample of 800 per state on average ensured that most of the survey results are applicable at the national, regional (e.g., Dove Management Unit (DMU) and state levels. To learn more about the HIP database, go to www.fws.gov/hip/.

How many people participated in the National Dove Hunter Survey?

Of the 30,382 surveys successfully delivered, 12,631 hunters responded—earning a 41.6% response rate. The rounded margin of error for national estimates is 1%, and for DMU estimates, 2% (95% confidence level).

What is next for the National Dove Hunter Survey?

This National Dove Hunter Survey report contains simple frequency analysis of hunter responses to the survey questions and serves to facilitate the timely distribution of this information to cooperating agencies. A more detailed information-theoretic analysis is underway. Results from rigorous statistical analyses and modeling of the survey data will be submitted for presentation in a peer-reviewed, scientific journal.

ABOUT DOVE HUNTERS -

DOVE HUNTER CHARACTERISTICS

On average, the survey found that dove hunters are white males, 45 years of age and older. They are well educated (over 70% had at least some college) with higher-than-average income—more than half make \$75,000 or more per year. Dove hunters typically live in small towns/cities or rural areas, though more western hunters live in large cities or urban areas than eastern or central U.S. hunters.

DOVE HUNTER BEHAVIORS

Most of the individuals surveyed said that they have been hunting doves for more than 20 years. The majority indicated they hunt “occasionally throughout the dove season” and spend \$50 or less on shotshells while approximately a quarter of the respondents hunt as many days as they can throughout the entire season, some expending “cases” of ammunition.

In addition, the majority of dove hunters said that they harvest fewer than 30 birds per season, about 6% said they harvest more than 100. Most of the participants indicated that they hunt only on private land or mostly on private land, with a majority of respondents traveling 50 miles or more to get to their hunting spot. A small number (10%) said that they have traveled to another country to hunt doves.

PERCEIVED HINDRANCES TO DOVE HUNTING

Respondents noted a number of hindrances to their dove hunting that have become more of a problem over the past five years: cost of gasoline (75%), cost of shotshells (60%), cost of gear other than shotshells (45%) and cost of hunting permits (36%).

OTHER HUNTING ACTIVITIES

The survey found that dove hunters like to engage in other hunting, including upland birds (59%), small mammals (63%), waterfowl (61%) and big game (83%). Almost all dove hunters (94%) have also shot sporting clays.

TRUSTED INFORMATION SOURCES

Respondents indicated that they largely trust avid/experienced dove hunters to represent the interest of dove hunters and they rely mostly upon friends/family and the Internet for hunting information.

The survey found that 79% of respondents get a lot or some information from friends and family—versus 13% from radio, 28% from newspapers, 32% from sporting goods stores, 36% from television, 47% from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 58% from the internet, 61% from their state wildlife agency and 64% from magazines.

DOVE HUNTERS & LEAD AMMUNITION -

Why did the National Dove Hunter Survey ask hunters about lead ammunition?

Recent concerns by hunters and other groups about potential impacts of lead ammunition on wildlife have prompted managers at all levels – from local wildlife areas to state agencies to national programs—to better understand hunters’ thoughts regarding this issue.

Of special note, the survey questions and collection of responses on this issue does not mean that non-toxic shot will be required to hunt doves in the future.

What did the National Dove Hunter Survey discover about dove hunters and their opinions and behaviors concerning lead ammunition?

USE OF LEAD AMMUNITION

More than 85% of the survey respondents “mostly” or “always” use lead shot to hunt doves, and the majority believe that lead shot substitutes are too expensive, may be hard to find in stores and do not perform as well.

If non-lead shot for dove hunting is required at some point in the future, the respondents believe that hunter participation could be impacted. Thirty-six percent agreed they would “probably quit hunting doves if required to use non-lead shot” (39% disagreed). Almost 50% thought requiring non-lead shot would reduce the number of young people recruited to hunting. Nearly half said they would probably reduce the number of trips they take to go dove hunting if required to use non-lead shot.

PERCEPTIONS OF LEAD EFFECTS ON DOVE HEALTH

Current research has not shown a population-level effect on doves as a result of consuming spent lead shot—though evidence exists that doves can be poisoned. Overall, the dove hunters questioned believe that they do not have enough information about the effects of lead on the health of doves and other wildlife, with only about 1 in 5 respondents indicating that concerns about lead shot consumption by wildlife have been explained to hunters. The other 4 out of 5 hunters were either neutral, didn’t know or agreed that explanation is lacking. Nearly half of respondents say they don’t know if eating lead pellets cause doves to die.

More than half of the hunters responding to the survey said that if population-level impacts can be demonstrated, they are willing to address the issue of lead ammunition. Fifty-four percent agreed they would be willing to use non-lead shot if scientific evidence showed the dove population was being harmed by eating lead pellets and 59% percent said they would use non-lead shot if they thought it would help wildlife.

HUNTING IN THE U.S. -

Why is hunting in the U.S. important in general?

For generations, hunters and recreational shooters have been the primary funders of wildlife restoration in the U.S. through their purchases of specially taxed gear—bows and arrows, guns and ammunition—and hunting licenses.

Thanks to hunting and sport-shooting purchases, state fish and wildlife agencies have been able to provide hunter education to more than 24 million people; build hundreds of public shooting ranges; develop Walk-In Hunting Access programs; educate youth in schools about the conservation of fish and wildlife; and deliver outdoor skills training to millions of Americans of all ages.

How does hunting help the U.S. economy?

Hunting in general provides an \$86.9 billion impact on the national economy and generates approximately \$11.8 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues. The typical hunter spends \$2,800 each year on hunting-related expenditures; in total, hunters spend approximately \$38.3 billion on equipment, licenses, trips and other hunting-related expenses annually. [Source: [2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife-related Recreation](#)]