

Reasons Not to Open a Shooting Season on Doves

- **Hunting doves is unnecessary and serves no wildlife management purpose.**
Mourning doves – also known as the farmer's friend – are ground-feeding birds that eat pest weed seeds; they pose no threat to agricultural crops, homes, or anything of value to people. Other northern states also have long-standing policies of protecting doves. There are no management problems within those states and no one has suggested that doves are overpopulated.
- **Mourning doves have significant economic value as live songbirds.**
Doves are beloved backyard birds and an important part of the multi-million dollar bird watching and feeding industry in Iowa. As a backyard songbird, scientific research studies show the mourning dove as "the second most-frequently reported bird at feeders." More Iowa residents participate in wildlife watching and spend more money doing it than any other outdoor activity – including all forms of hunting combined.
- **Doves are not a viable human food source.**
As small birds, even if shot properly, doves have very little "edible" flesh on them. During the 60-day shooting season that would take place in September and October, doves are actually at their lightest body weight for the entire year. However, doves are an important source of food for protected birds of prey such as eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls.
- **Shooting doves is known to produce orphaned young.**
Doves are scientifically known to still be nesting during the 60-day shooting season of September and October. Doves mate for life because both parents are required to successfully fledge squabs. The killing of one parent is known to cause unnecessary suffering of dependent young who will die in the nest of starvation.
- **There is an unacceptably high wounding rate for dove hunting.**
Scientific research studies confirm an average wounding rate of 30 percent in hunted areas — meaning that nearly one in three birds is wounded and not retrieved after being shot. In Iowa, where there is no tradition of dove hunting and where few hunters have had the experience of shooting at doves, we can expect an even higher wounding rate.
- **There are plenty of other species for the sporting community to pursue and shoot in the state.**
At least 49 species are considered game species in Iowa. Not counting unprotected birds, 38 of these game species are birds. Turkeys, pheasants, geese, ducks, woodcock, rails, snipe, and dozens of other bird species give recreational

hunters more than ample shooting opportunities at all times of the year in Iowa. In fact, hunting seasons are longer and bag limits are larger than ever for many species.

- **Shooting at doves produces mistaken identity kills.**

Many "non-target" avian species, including American kestrels, Sharp-shinned hawks and several other federally protected species, are often unavoidably and mistakenly shot by mourning dove hunters.

- **Dove shooting will contribute to the discharge of enormous amounts of toxic lead shot in the environment.**

For every dove shot and bagged, hunters discharge an average of 8 shots, according to a long-term study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Densities of greater than 860,000 pellets per hectare have been reported in dove fields, which are usually crop-growing soils. Cumulative lead deposits pose a significant risk to ground-feeding mourning doves and to other wildlife that directly and indirectly ingest toxic shot, including birds of prey and other animals who scavenge on downed birds.

Opposition to Dove Hunting in Other States

Iowans are not alone in opposing dove hunting. In November 2006, Michigan voters were asked whether to open a new dove hunting season after a century of dove protection. They overwhelmingly rejected Proposal 3, a statewide referendum which would have allowed dove hunting, by a landslide vote of 69 percent to 31 percent. Proposal 3 was backed by the National Rifle Association, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, Safari Club International, and other national hunting groups, and was opposed by The Humane Society of the United States, Michigan Humane Society, Michigan Audubon Society, Michigan State Grange, and a diverse coalition of organizations and businesses. Michigan is one of the biggest hunting states in the country, but voters rejected dove hunting in each of the 83 counties in the state, from the most urban to the most rural.