

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## The herd immunity of gun ownership

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Herd immunity describes what happens when immunizing part of a community provides protection for those in the community who are not immunized. This usually refers to infectious diseases that spread from person-to-person, like measles, mumps, and the like.

This occurs because the more people in a community who are immunized, the less likely an unimmunized person will come into contact with an infected person. The disease is unable to survive because there are insufficient numbers of people to infect and spread the disease. The immunized protect the unimmunized from contracting the disease, creating herd immunity.

Criminal behavior responding to gun ownership leads to an analogous situation. However, before committing a crime, criminals do something that infectious diseases cannot do. At some level, they analyze the risk compared to the reward. And it is their consideration of risk and reward that leads to gun owners providing herd immunity to those who do not own guns.

It is a rare headline reporting a criminal trying to hold-up a police station. The reason. The criminal knows there are lots of guns there, lots of people who know how to use those guns, and little of value to steal. Is the risk too high for the reward? What if every homeowner owned a gun? Would that decrease the number of home break-ins? What if no homeowners owned a gun? Would that increase the

number of home break-ins? Which homes offer the lower risk for the reward?

About 50% of households in the United States have at least one gun owner in the home, giving the criminal a theoretical 50% chance of being shot. Is the risk worth the reward?

Let's look at hypothetical neighboring communities, one with only 5% of the homes with guns and one with 75% of the homes with guns. Which community will the criminal pick? Which community offers the lower risk for the reward?

Now, look more closely at the community with 75% gun ownership, the community the criminals selectively avoid. The homes with guns also prevented the criminals from breaking into the homes without guns, granting them herd immunity. The gun control advocates are protected by the very gun owners they demand to disarm. The criminal's analysis of risk versus reward led to herd immunity.

This helps explain why crime increased in Australia, where overnight private gun ownership was outlawed. Or why crime increased in England, where overnight private handgun ownership was outlawed. The risk versus reward ratio changed when the protection from herd immunity disappeared.

Maybe we should remove herd immunity from the gun debate. Maybe the people opposed to legal gun ownership need to stand up and

take a principled stance, stand up and get counted. Maybe they need to put signs in their yard saying they oppose legal gun ownership and they guarantee there are no guns in their home.

Let the criminals know that if they break-in to one of those homes they will not be shot; instead, the homeowner will call the police, wait for their arrival, and hope the criminals do not harm them and leave before the police can arrive.

This is all an unarmed homeowner can do, because police officers rarely get the opportunity to prevent a crime from occurring. Rather, they apprehend the criminal after the fact, after the crime is over.

Should people opposing legal gun ownership stop using gun owners for protection? Should they stop hiding behind the herd immunity provided by gun owners? Let's return to the Clint Eastwood Dirty Harry days, but turn the tables. The gun control advocates can lay down without a gun and let the criminal say, "Make my day."

Guns are not the problem - criminals are . . . . . and the people who want to disarm legal gun owners.