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Demand-driven firearms and ammunition shortages that once fueled government conspiracy theories has subsided, local retailers say.

The panic sent shock-waves through the firearms industry, leading some dealers to unwisely invest in inventory that soon dropped in demand, particularly AR-style rifles.

"While its good for the industry in the short term, in the long term it ended up causing a lot of discontent," Kelland said. "Nobody was able to get anything, and then when you could, everybody jumped on it and it just snowballed. We are our own worst enemies in that respect — people would panic buy, then the next person can't get it and the conspiracy theories start flying."

Anxiety over weapon availability has since subsided and ammunition that was once scarce, such as .22 caliber bullets, is now readily available.

### Walmart

Walmart, America's largest gun retailer, announced in September plans to reduce gun and ammunition sales, roughly a month after 20 people were killed in a Walmart in El Paso, Texas.

Kelland is hopeful these policy changes will translate into more sales for smaller shops like his.

Ammunition sales account for about 30% of the business, he said, which was cut 50% after Walmart opened a store in Warrenton in June 2018.

"My ammo sales have dropped precipitously after Walmart moved in," Kelland

said. "I just don't move the big lots like I used to."

### NFA sales

In December 2018, Kelland acquired his Class 3 Firearms License, which permits him to sell National Firearms Act (NFA) restricted weapons and components, from fully automatic machine guns to silencers.

"I had an initial burst of 10 suppressor sales, then nothing since May," Kelland said. "Unfortunately, they're all sitting in a safe because none of the paperwork has cleared from back in February. It takes that long."

### Conceal carry permits, personal safety trainings

In lieu of terrorist attacks and mass shootings, self-protection has become an increasingly popular segment of firearms sales nationwide. In 2015, more than 14.3 million conceal carry permits were issued nationwide, an increase of 1.73 million — the largest ever.

Currently, approximately 6% the U.S. adult population holds a permit, according to NICS. Washington has among the highest per capita level of permit holders with 515,065 registered conceal and carry gun owners, while Oregon has 226,255. Florida has issued the most, with 1.58 million. The number of women with permits has increased twice as quickly, according to data compiled by the Crime Prevention

Research Center.

Kelland, who has more than 20 years combined in military and law enforcement training, offers a monthly Concealed Handgun License (CHL) in Warrenton, which he said has become increasingly popular. He's now considering adding a new course focusing more on personal safety.

"It will open up another avenue for people who aren't necessarily gun people to get into the mindset of personal protection and safety without having to use firearms," Kelland said.

Kelland believes the course could have a broad appeal.

"Everyone should be cognizant of what's going on around them and how to keep themselves safe in any kind of environment," he said. "It's a lot of situational awareness, danger cues, what to look for in your day-to-day routine, how to drive tactically but not offensively."

Much of the training will focus on situational awareness, counter surveillance and the premise of "How to make yourself a harder target," Kelland said.

"It's not about getting into a gun fight with somebody, it's about avoiding them. If you can keep yourself safe through observation, you're already ahead of the game. There's a certain segment of the population that doesn't think that way and the idea is to give them the tools," he said.

Details about the cost and location of the course are still being determined.