

# USE ENOUGH AIRGUN!

by Luke Clayton

One of my favorite hunting writers has always been Robert Ruark. Cory Ford is another old time writer that, after reading a paragraph or two that he penned, it becomes crystal clear that he was “Out there and did that”. I wouldn’t give you ten cents for all the words an “arm chair” hunting writer pens. Regardless the endeavor, whether it be working on automobiles or surveying land, one has to be on the ground, doing it!

A lot of knowledge and wisdom can be gleaned from reading these veteran writers that because of the era they lived/wrote, had the opportunity to experience an enormous amount of time in the field doing what they became famous for, hunting and writing about their hunts..

Ruark coined the moniker “Use Enough Gun” while hunting with the famous PH Harry Selby. Ruark was handed a little .220 Swift and instructed to shoot a wart hog that would be used for leopard bait. The shot from the little rifle did little more than leave a wound on the hog’s rear ham. At that moment, Ruark swore off the light stuff for shooting big game.

I definitely agree with Ruark in regards to shooting big bullets from big calibers when shooting big game animals. I remember watching a Youtube video a couple years ago (it’s probably still there) with a hunter shooting a boar in the head with a tiny bullet from a .177 caliber air rifle. The shot that was on the video was a perfect brain shot and the porker was anchored on the spot. After watching the video, I had many questions and after a lifetime of hunting hogs, I felt confident I knew the answers.

Will such a tiny bullet anchor a boar? The answer is obviously YES but only IF the shot is perfect and penetrates the brain. I’m sure a shot through the lungs or heart with a tiny bullet will eventually kill the hog but not in a humane way. It’s a good bet the hog would escape and the meat never be recovered.

In the real world of hunting hogs is the brain shot a high percentage shot? Most definitely not. Hogs, even when baited, seldom remain still for very long when feeding. They are continuously moving around and when they present a good shot, the hunter better be ready and have the slack taken out of the trigger. That are many big bore air rifles on the market that are quiet capable of cleanly harvesting even the biggest of boars. I’ve used several of them to put pork in the freezer. I have a great friend that killed a monster boar that weighed just over 400 pounds with a big bore air rifle, the bullet went completely through both shoulders.

Since I began seriously hunting with air rifles, I wondered if a .25 caliber rifle was big enough for smaller hogs. I had an experiment in mind and I just had to bring it to fruition. I’ve been shooting and hunting with an Airforce Condor SS for the past year and have found the rifle to be a

tack driver and I’ve used it to harvest squirrels, rabbits and raccoons. It’s my ‘go to’ rifle for small game.

This rifle is the hardest shooting small caliber air rifle I’ve put to work. Since the day I began shooting it, I was plagued by the question: can I use my .25 caliber Condor for close order work on smaller hogs? I knew the “perfect” brain shot was out of the question. A shot a couple inches high or low would result in a wounded pig and that is something I did not wish to risk. Then, I received a box of 48 grain hollow point solid lead bullets from Hunters Supply. I took a couple of big swamp rabbits with these bullets and noted bullet expansion even in the thin skinned animals. I felt confident that the heavier bullets would cleanly harvest a smaller hog with a ‘through the vitals’ shot.

Last August, my trail cameras near my home evidenced an older sow had given birth to ten pigs. This old sow was as smart as any wild animal I’ve hunted, she has to be. Every predator in the woods (myself included) enjoys eating pork. She would bring her pigs to a feeder back in the woods around noon each day, just like a wary old whitetail buck that ventures forth when he thinks all the hunters have left the woods.



Luke watched these pigs on his trail camera grow into BBQ size. A mature sow such as this one is one of the smartest animals in the woods. Photos by Luke Clayton

I looked at all this wild pork in the woods much like a farmer would look at the pork he’s raising. I would wait till the pigs grew into BBQ size and then harvest them as needed. Well, by mid January, the pigs were looking pretty good to me. BBQ was written all over them!

My plan was to hunt from a bowstand situated about 18 yards from where I’d been feeding corn to the sow and pigs. I sighted the rifle to be dead on at 20 yards with the 48 grain hollow points, not one inch high or low but dead on. This shot was well thought out and practiced. My rifle was stacking em in the same hole at this close distance. I was ready.

After observing the sow and pigs hitting my spot for two consecutive days within thirty minutes of noon, on a bright and chilly winter’s day, I put my plan into action. I approached the stand from downwind and climbed the 16 feet to the seat. Checking my watch, I had arrived just after 10 am. If the opportunity presented itself, I would harvest one of those fat little porkers with a heart shot at close range. Hogs, and most game animals, often run a few yards when heart shot but it’s a very high percentage shot. If for some reason, the shot is a bit high, I should still have pork chops on the ground. I expected my BBQ pig to expire on a dead run within sight.