



We Texans have gained a reputation for being a bit braggadocios, at least that's what some "out of staters" believe us to be. Being born and raised in the Lone Star State, I've encountered a few fellow Texans that might be more than a bit exuberant when talking about their state, hunting dog or truck but most of their banter is well meant and good natured. Late last summer, I first encountered a Texan that, once I took time to really get to know (it), discovered that there is really no need for bragging, this prowess of this Texan speaks for itself. I'm referring to Airforce Airgun's new 45 caliber big bore air rifle; The Texan!

During my 26 years as an outdoors writer, I've been asked to keep quiet about a few "newsy" items that I found very challenging. When I discover something new and innovative, I want to let the world know! Such was the case with the new 45 caliber Texan. Airforce Airgun's plan was to introduce their new rifle at the SHOT show in January and until then, those of us that tested and hunted with the rifle were instructed to hold our words until the official word was out after the new rifle's coming out party at SHOT. Our duty was to thoroughly put the rifle through its paces in the real world of shooting and hunting. I can testify for a fact that this is exactly what this old hunter did.

My introduction to the new rifle was at the company's range in Ft. Worth. We were shooting 45 caliber 350 grain bullets made by Hunters Supply and I was astounded at the groups, speed and power this rifle was generating. My personal trainer for this session was none other than TV show host and veteran shooter/hunter Clinton "Ton" Jones. After I fired my first 3 shot group at 100 yards, I felt that I was shooting a genuine, game getter big bore air rifle that was capable of cleanly harvesting big game animals out to 100 yards shooting the heavy projectiles. I later proved this fact to myself during the acid test of real world hunting. The folks at Airforce made sure I was thoroughly



*For cleanly harvesting big game, Luke favorites a heavy bullet. This 350 grain solid lead bullet by Hunters Supply has performed flawlessly on everything Luke's used it on. Photo by Luke Clayton*

familiar with the new rifle before I left their facility. On the drive home, my mind mulled over all the projects I had planned for the new big bore.

First, I wanted to determine for myself the speed of the big bullets, pushed by 3,000 psi. of compressed air. Next, I wanted to determine the proper zero for the rifle. I wanted to discover what yardage I needed to zero the rifle in order for a true "center of shoulder" hold on deer size game at ranges from point blank out to 100 yards. I live close to some very good wild hog hunting, actually a 10 minute drive from my home in my electric hunting buggy takes me the 1.5 miles to my nearest hog stand.

There is a great deal in the airgun world written about hog hunting. Because I love hunting them and they are plentiful close to my home and legal game here in Texas, I probably do more than my share of "hog hunting" articles. But I am thankful we have them to hunt. I don't consider wild hogs as "vermin" as much of the outdoor press portrays them to be. Wild pork is excellent eating and hog hunting opportunities abound. For the acid test with this new rifle, I thought I'd plan a hunt for Aoudad. Aoudad sheep are one of the most skittish, hard to approach animals I've hunted. They have the reputations of being tough as nails and "wiry" as a steel brush. I put The Texan to work on an Aoudad hunt this past fall.

But first things first, I needed to spend a lot of time shooting and getting to know the new rifle. Ballistic charts are great as a reference and they serve as a great baseline, but there is absolutely no better way to determine bullet drop at various yardages than actually shooting. This I did. I shot the Texan a great deal for a full week before I decided to take it on a late afternoon hog hunt.

I'd read the stats on the rifle but I wanted to know exactly how fast it was pushing the big bullet. The big question was the first shot with a full 3,000 psi. charge. It's that first shot I was really interested in which is 99% of the time the only important shot when hunting big game hunting. The chronograph provided the data that shooting at 100 yards had already indicated; this big hunk of lead was whistling! If you've shot a lot, it's pretty easy to determine by the strike of the bullet just how fast an air rifle is pushing a bullet. My ears told me this rifle was FAST. The chronograph proved just how fast. My first three shots with the 3,000 psi charge averaged 797 fps. The second shots averaged 778 fps. which I found made no significant difference in bullet placement in regards to the first shot.

It's important to know that I am not a proficient bench rest shooter. Most of the shooting I do is based on what I learned years ago in the Marine Corps and a lifetime of hunting. I still shoot from sitting and prone positions I learned long ago with the exception of using shooting sticks when applicable. Thus, a 2 or 3 inch group at 100 yards that I am proud of (and consider more than acceptable in the real world of hunting) would be considered as sloppy shooting by a veteran pro bench shooter.

After much experimenting, I came upon the zero that I consider most efficient. Sighted dead on at 75 yards, I discovered my groups were about two inches high at 25 yards, three inches high at 50 yards and around six inches low at 100 yards. The center of shoulder hold on deer size game would