

Deer hunt ends up with pig on Wilderness Unlimited ranch

BY DENNIS CHAMP

Editor's Note: Dennis Champ submitted a First Person Report back in August on a pig hunt when he downed a big boar. This time, he did it again, but during a deer hunt. Quite an accomplishment!

Weeks before this year's deer season, I submitted my reservation form for Wilderness Unlimited's Big Game drawing. This year my submission was pulled for a three-points or better ranch, which is only open from Saturday to Tuesday each week of the hunting season. With the limited amount of pressure on this ranch, I knew I could see lots of game.

On the first day of my hunt, I arrived at the ranch about a half-hour before sunrise. I started to spot deer coming out of the hay fields as they moved into the hills to bed down. Most of the deer that morning were does with yearlings and spikes. As I made my way spotting and stalking throughout the day, I saw several forked horns and one three-point but could not make a good shot on him. That evening the deer I saw making their way back out to feed in the hay fields were again all does, yearlings, spikes and forked horns. I did see one big forked horn that had to be a four- or five-year-old buck. He had big forks and a big body, but I was on a three-point or better ranch.

Near nightfall, I saw two groups of small pigs making their way down from the hills. All of them were less than 80 pounds each. I was able to get within 20 feet of one group of three pigs, but they were only about 60 pounds each. Taking one of those small pigs would have ended my hunt on the ranch, so I passed on that chance.

The next morning started out like the first morning, with sightings of does and yearlings, spikes and forked horns, plus the same little pigs from the previous night, all moving back into the woods to bed down. As I made my way back to camp for breakfast, I looked out over the hay fields where several cattle were feeding and I saw shapes that did not look like the others.

I stopped and glassed the shapes. It was a group of pigs and in that group there was one huge pig. The pigs were in an open field on the opposite side from me. I moved around a hill and used a big oak tree to cover my movements and give me a chance to move in closer. Once at the oak tree I neared the barbed wire fence and climbed over

it. I then moved in at an angle to push the cattle in the field toward the pigs, using them as a screen to get closer. I hunched over and approached, keeping a few steers as a screen between the pigs and me.

Once I was within 50 yards of the pigs, the cattle cleared out of the way and hung back, creating a wall of cattle behind me. I went down on one knee to set up my shooting sticks and position my rifle. There were two boars and two smaller pigs. The two boars were busy sparring with each other and not paying any attention to me. The large boar paused, turned and looked my way. He then lowered his head. I took that opportunity to make my shot, hitting him and dropping him where he stood.

I used a Browning .30-06 with Winchester ammunition, 180-grain E Tip lead-free bullet and Stone Point-Cat Pole shooting sticks, which helped me be more accurate.

I estimated the pig's weight at over 225 pounds. When I skinned

and broke down the pig to put it into the ice chest, I found the bullet just inside his left shoulder. I had aimed for the boar's right eye and that's where the bullet hit. It had traveled diagonally through his head and neck, finally stopping just in his left shoulder. I took the bullet to my dad, who weighed it to see if it lost any of its weight. It weighed in at 180 grains — 100% of its original weight. I was very pleased with the ammunition's accuracy and how the bullet mushroomed and held together.

I took the pig to a butcher in Madera, CA, where the carcass weighed in at just under 130 pounds. I hadn't planned on shooting a pig that weekend, but when I got that opportunity to take one of that size, I could not pass it up. That makes two good sized pigs for me within one month of each other taken on Wilderness Unlimited Ranches.

Dennis Champ is from Fresno.



DENNIS CHAMP hunted a Central Coast ranch, one of Wilderness Unlimited's properties, and while looking for a big buck 3 points or better, opted for this big tusker.

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