

TEHACHAPI HOGS

BARNES AND DRT
AMMO HANDLE
THE TOUGH
MOUNTAIN
BOARS OF
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA.

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It was a dark, crisp December morning as we motored slowly along the dirt road leading up into the Tehachapi Mountains southeast of Bakersfield, California. My two companions, Norman Hanson and Alan Chandler, had picked me up at “zero dark 30,” cups of strong coffee in hand (and one for me, of course—strong and black!), and we’d sallied forth on what was destined to become one of the most memorable hunts I’d ever experienced.

I’ve hunted wild pigs all over the world—the southeastern United States, Bavaria, the Philippines, southeast Asia, Africa and Hawaii. And in the process, I’d discovered a few things.

First of all, wild pigs are smart, fast and, if cornered, dangerous. In the United States, their range has steadily increased over the last three decades to the point at which they’ve become a major, and growing, problem. Like any

other animal, pigs must eat; but wild pigs eat a lot and breed virtually all year around, producing an average of four litters per year, which makes for major crop damage for farmers and ranchers. They’re also highly social and organized, far more than other species, which makes their explosive growth in numbers easy to understand.

A DIFFERENT BREED OF TOUGH

Yet, in hunting them over the years, I’d also discovered they were relatively easy to kill. All you had to do was hit them in their vulnerable areas, just as on any other critter. Thus, as a successful hunter of many years, I’d simply logged the information about them into my memory and let it go at that.

But Norm and Alan had told me that Tehachapi pigs are different: They are super-tough, tenacious and more aggressive than typical wild pigs. This is due primarily to the fact that they spend a great deal of time running up and down 60- and 70-degree mountain slopes and traveling great distances back and forth between their bedding and feeding/watering areas. As a result, their cardio-vascular systems are, of necessity, more highly developed.

On my first hunt with them several years earlier, I’d discovered (to my chagrin) that Norm and Alan were right. I’d never before seen pigs so tough! More than once, I’d perfectly placed my shot tight behind the front shoulder, only to see the pigs take off, often straight uphill, and disappear over the ridge top. This is something you simply don’t see with other critters, which,

Due to their extraordinary cardio-vascular development from running up and down steep mountain slopes daily, the boars of California’s Tehachapi Mountains are big, smart and hard to put down. (Photo: Neil Burton/Dreamstime)

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when seriously wounded, will nearly always turn abruptly downhill. I'd also seen other hunters place their shots the same way—with exactly the same results—necessitating a long tracking exercise to recover them.

BARNES & DRT: EFFECTIVE PILLS FOR TOUGH HOGS

As a result, I'd decided that maximum penetration, bone-breaking ability and, of course, accuracy were all called for, so I opted to try both the Barnes VOR-TX and Dynamic Research Technologies (DRT) Terminal Shock factory fodder.

VOR-TX ammo features the company's tried-and-true Tipped Triple Shock X (TTSX) bullet, while DRT bullets feature a

Rooted-up areas where the pigs have been digging up acorns and other succulents are evidence of active feeding. The wild barley that grows in profusion on the southern exposures of the ridgelines in the Tehachapi Mountains is another of their favorites.

revolutionary retarded-frangible design that allows penetration to vital organs, breaks bones and then fragments, virtually destroying internal organs. I'd used both for years, with excellent results, on dozens of animals (mule and whitetail deer, elk, bear, mountain lion and a slew of small game critters), so my confidence in them was absolute.

The day before, Norm, Alan and I had decided they would use the Barnes VOR-TX ammo, while I would go with the DRT. Norm selected the VOR-TX 200-grain TTSX for his custom Winchester Model 70 .35 Whelen, while Alan had opted for VOR-TX 130-grain .308 Win. in his custom Savage M-110. I,

... THE BARNES VOR-TX AND DRT TERMINAL SHOCK AMMO HAD DONE THE JOB PERFECTLY. NO ANIMAL HAD GONE ANY SERIOUS DISTANCE AFTER BEING HIT; NONE REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP SHOTS; AND ALL WERE EASILY RECOVERED.



The boars of California's Tehachapi Mountains are tough. They're found as high as 7,000 feet and find snow to be no handicap. (Photo: Anagram/Dreamstime)

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Wild boars also love to root and wallow in swampy places to cool off and coat themselves with mud. The many streams and artesian springs in the Tehachapi Mountains are, therefore, prime locations. (Photo: Neil Burton/Dreamstime)

on the other hand, am a big fan of longer-range engagements to catch my game unaware, and this means potentially shooting across canyons. Consequently, I selected my custom-blueprinted, precision-configured Winchester Model 70 in .300 Winchester Magnum and DRT's 150-grain Terminal Shock ammo.

This particular rig had downed many big-game animals for me without failure and was calibrated to 1,000 meters in 25-meter increments; as a result, I reasoned that all the possible scenarios I might encounter were covered.

While compliant with the California law prohibiting lead-core bullets, ammo from Dynamic Research Technologies and Barnes "gets it done."

All our rifles printed three-shot rested groups of ½ MOA or better, with mine the most accurate of them all, at ¼ MOA. So, whatever else might happen, we knew our rifles and ammo were fully prepared for anything. The only question, as always, was *us*—as hunters and shooters.

Thus, with four tags in my pocket, and Norm and Alan with one apiece, we headed into the high country with high spirits. From the moment I awakened that morning, I just knew we were going to have a great hunt, but I never realized how terrific it was going to be.



A wild boar's thoracic organs are located more forward than most species and are well-protected as a result. They also have massive bone structure and a breast plate of thick, leathery hide. They're fast, tough, aggressive and dangerous at close quarters, so putting them down quickly is critical. (Photo: Neil Burton/Dreamstime)



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THE HUNT— TAG #1

The sun had not yet risen above the horizon when the action began. Driving along the primitive dirt road leading into the mountains, we'd encountered a group of about 20 pigs moving briskly across the valley floor in that ground-eating trot common to the breed. Trailing a bit behind the others was a nice-looking boar, so Alan decided to go after him. Norm and I continued along the road, hoping to intercept the group before its members started up the nearest mountainside.

We hadn't gone more than 200 meters when a shot from Alan's Savage M-110 .308 reached us. Then, a few seconds later, Alan's voice crackled on the radio, "One down!"

We hurried back to see his trophy. He'd busted the boar from 300 meters with a nice quartering-away hit. Visual examination showed that the 130-grain TTSX had penetrated diagonally through the animal from its point of impact just forward of the pig's right hip and exited in front of his left shoulder, leaving a 1½-inch exit hole. The boar had, Alan said, continued to run for about 50 meters and then piled up. Weighed later, the pig dressed out at 190 pounds.

Leaving Alan to field-dress and stow his pig on his Jeep Rubicon, Norm and I continued down the road. However, we hadn't gone even a half-mile when another group of pigs crossed in front of us, heading for the mountainside to our right. Taking a small jeep trail that led generally in their direction, we turned off, hoping to get to a point at which we could intercept them before they reached the slope.

Wow! I thought to myself. Two groups of pigs already, and the sun isn't even up yet!

Unfortunately, it didn't look as if we were going to make it. Nevertheless, some deft driving on Norm's part brought us to a point at which I might be able to engage them, although they were now running dead-away from us.

I bailed out of the truck, quickly glassed them, spotted a nice pig and lased her, finding the range to be approaching 500 meters. Quickly setting the Leupold 6.5-20x40mm target scope on my Model 70 for 535 meters, I took up a rest across the hood of Norm's truck, quickly took a couple of deep breaths and let 'er rip. The .300 Winchester shattered the early-morning calm, and the 150-grain Terminal Shock was on its way.

Spectacular terminal ballistics without loss of penetration is a DRT hallmark. Here is the wound cavity from a .308 Win. 135-grain DRT Terminal Shock bullet in a 6x6x16-inch FBI gel block.

The author, with his first porker of the day—a nice 220-pounder. It was taken shortly after sunrise with Winchester M70 custom .300 Win. and a single hit with DRT Terminal Shock 150-grain ammo at a whopping 535 meters (585 yards) while running straight away.

A second later, I saw it hit right at the base of the pig's tail—a pronounced puff of dirt and fur marking its impact. Another second later, a loud *whop!* reached us, and the pig tumbled, end over end, and never got up.

"Damn," Norm said. "Now *that* was a good shot!"

I grinned, trying to be humble ... but inside, I was as tickled as he was.

Field-dressing disclosed that the DRT bullet had struck at the base of the tail, traveled through the pelvis, shattered the base of the spine and continued on through the abdominal cavity, passed through the diaphragm and virtually exploded in the thoracic cavity, shredding everything therein. Terminal Shock, indeed!

"One down," I said, with a smile.

TAG #2

Back in the truck and a half-mile later, the sun came up, and we found ourselves in the mountains. Marveling at the beautiful morning, I was amazed to see a large, lone pig up on a ridge several hundred meters above us.

Coming to a quick stop, Norm said, "Go ahead, amigo."

I dismounted, found the wind and terrain to be favorable, and elected to do a quick stalk. However, when I was about 120 meters from the pig, the wind changed, and the pig took off.





However, she had to cross several hundred meters of open ridgeline to get away. She didn't make it.

I went prone, leaving the scope set at its zero range of 250 meters, took a quick breath and, aiming low behind the shoulder with a foot of lead, squeezed off a shot.

Once again, the Model 70 shattered the morning calm, and the 150-grain DRT was on its way. And once again, I heard the loud *whop!* of its arrival on target.

Without further ado, down she went. The DRT bullet had again struck on target. It penetrated deep into the thoracic cavity and destroyed everything.

Hmmm, I thought. This stuff works! And I was further delighted to find that the dressed weight of my pig was 240 pounds.

TAG #3

With two of my four tags now filled, we continued to climb higher, seeing pigs everywhere we went. But no shots were possible. So, after stopping at around 7,000 feet for a quick sandwich and a cup of coffee, we continued on.

In the early afternoon, we caught another group of pigs below us, climbing a draw.

I quickly glanced at Norm, who once again said, "Your shot, ace!"

So, I dismounted, went prone on the jeep trail, lased the pigs and found them to be 300 meters below. I decided to let them come to us so I wouldn't have to drag a carcass up a 70-degree slope. Nevertheless, at 225 meters, the pig I wanted spotted us and began to trot away parallel to the jeep trail.

The author's second pig was spotted about a half-hour after the first one. It was stalked and taken while trotting, with a single, left-facing broadside shot at 120 meters. Again, DRT 150-grain .300 Win. Terminal Shock ammo was utilized. This boar weighed 240 pounds.

Aiming a bit low for the steep downhill angle, I put my crosshairs low and just a bit in front of the pig's shoulder, took a deep breath and squeezed the trigger. The .300 Winchester loudly belched its message, and I was again rewarded with a loud *whop!* The pig unceremoniously went down in a cloud of dust. After dragging the carcass (this one weighed in at 225 pounds) up to the trail and dressing it out, I grinned at Norm.

"Three down; one to go!"

As before, the DRT 150-grain Terminal Shock had done its work perfectly.

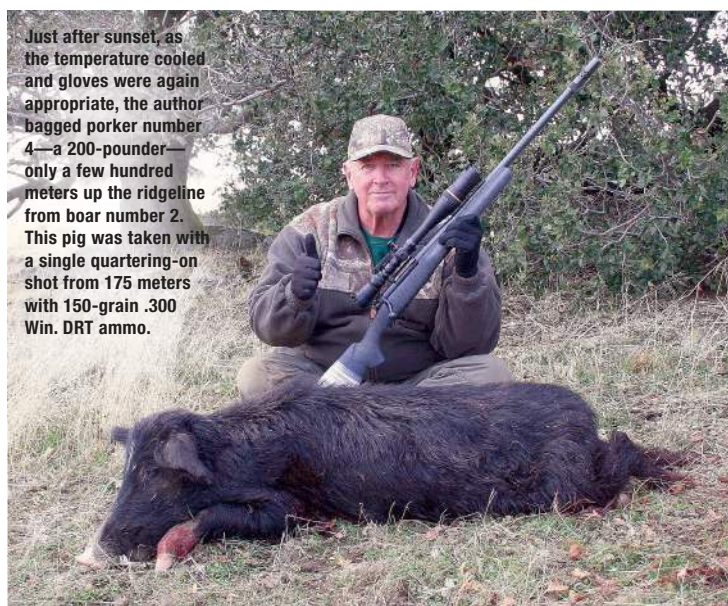
Alan, who had caught up with us, looked at my pig and the two others in the back of Norm's Ford F-350, grinned and said, "Nice work!"

Continuing to drive the jeep trails during the afternoon, we saw pigs galore. Wherever we went, regardless of altitude, they were out and about—which isn't typical. Normally, they move during the dawn and dusk periods like other game. But for some reason, there were out all day long. Unfortunately, due to extreme range or unfavorable winds, no shots were possible.

FOUR TAGS, FOUR ACES

Late in the afternoon, we found ourselves in the same area in which I'd bagged my second pig that morning. Our luck was holding, because as the afternoon sun began to set, we spotted a sounder of a dozen pigs feeding on top of an adjacent hill. At my insistence, Norm and I both went after them.

The pig I selected was quartering-on at about 175 meters, with another nice porker only 10 meters away from him. I nodded at Norm, who indicated he would take that one, while I sat down with my back to a tree and slung up.



Just after sunset, as the temperature cooled and gloves were again appropriate, the author bagged porker number 4—a 200-pounder—only a few hundred meters up the ridgeline from boar number 2. This pig was taken with a single quartering-on shot from 175 meters with 150-grain .300 Win. DRT ammo.



Just at dawn, Alan Chandler bagged this 190-pound boar with his custom Savage M110, using Barnes VOR-TX 130-grain .308 Win. ammo. The pig was quartering away to the right, trotting, at 300 meters, but it was downed with a single hit.

Norm gestured for me to go ahead ... and my fourth pig of the day was history. The 150-grain DRT struck her in the chest just to the left of the front shoulder, penetrated deep into the thoracic cavity and, as before, destroyed everything therein. Another 200-pounder. Four tags, four pigs down—four aces!

As my rifle came out of recoil and I worked the bolt in case a follow-up shot was needed, I dimly heard the report of Norm's .35 Whelen. After ascertaining that my pig was down, I stole a quick glance at Norm's pig. It, too, was down. The big, 200-grain Barnes TTSX boat-tail had traversed the entire pig from front to back, exiting from the animal's rump, leaving a 1½-inch exit hole. It had collapsed instantly and weighed 200 pounds dressed.

It was with great satisfaction that we field-dressed the last two pigs, packed them on to Norm's truck and Alan's Rubicon and began the slow descent out of the mountains. Six filled tags—a "full house" and a personal "four aces" for me. And what a pile o' porkers it was! The freezers would be full for quite a while.

Now, with ample time to think about the day as we traversed the windy route back down out of the mountains, I realized we had just had the pig hunt of a lifetime—the likes of which we'd probably never see again.

I also realized the Barnes VOR-TX and DRT Terminal Shock ammo had done the job perfectly. No animal had gone any serious distance after being hit; none required follow-up shots; and all were easily recovered. This is something that doesn't often happen on these critters with ammo utilizing

As the author got his fourth big porker of the day, Norman Hanson simultaneously took this 200-pound boar with a single shot from his Winchester M-70 .35 Whelen, using Barnes VOR-TX 200-grain TTSXs. The pig was trotting broadside at 110 meters, but only a single hit behind the shoulder was required to down him.



conventional bullet designs. Time and time again, with perfect hits using traditional bullet designs, I've seen them either simply run off or somehow "come back to life" after lying still for as long as 30 seconds (they leap to their feet and run away as if they had no injury).

So, if you're looking for ammo that "gets it done," even on tough critters such as the alpine boars of Tehachapi, Barnes VOR-TX and DRT Terminal Shock are, without a doubt, great choices. Moreover, they're both highly accurate and functionally reliable. In short, they're both excellent choices.

Try them; I think you'll agree. **GW**

TEHACHAPI PIGS ARE DIFFERENT: THEY ARE SUPER-TOUGH, TENACIOUS AND MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN TYPICAL WILD PIGS.