

angle of aim for frontal shot



Fig 1 Yellow/red star indicates aim point for a broadside chest shot. Yellow/red area in the skull shows the position of the brain

Introduction

Shooting wild boar is likely to be one of the main methods of controlling their numbers in areas where that is desirable, or for dealing with individual problem animals. This guide describes how to shoot wild boar humanely and safely with due regard to meat hygiene standards. The other guides in this series, together with the firearms series of deer best practice guides¹ should be considered as companion reading.

Firearms

Rifles

A rifle of not less than .270 Win calibre using an expanding bullet of not less than 150 grains should be considered the minimum for shooting boar. In much of Europe .30 calibre (or larger) rifles with at least 180 grain ammunition are considered necessary. Police Firearms Licensing Branches may require that wild boar are specifically listed on an individual's firearms certificate (FAC) before they may legally use a rifle to shoot wild boar. An FAC will normally only be endorsed for shooting of wild boar if the rifle held is of .270 calibre or larger. Wild boar will normally only be added to a FAC if the holder has authority to shoot on land within an area known to have wild boar present. (see Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police, 2002)

A rifle, rather than a shotgun, is the firearm generally recommended for shooting wild boar.

Shotguns

Shotguns should be double-barrelled or multi-shot and a minimum of a 12 bore, ideally with 3inch or longer chambers. When using shot cartridges the shotgun should preferably be fully choked, using full loads of AAA or SSG shot. Smaller or larger shot are not recommended. Note that any cartridge containing less than 5 shot or any shot bigger than .36 inches in diameter (LG size) require a firearms certificate. Ranges should be kept to 20 yards (metres) or below.

If rifled slug is used it should be at least 350 grains in weight. Seek a gunsmith's advice before using rifled slug in a particular shotgun, and test each shotgun/cartridge combination for accuracy. A group size of 4 inches should be considered the maximum and will determine the maximum sensible range. Rifled slug ammunition can only be purchased on a firearms certificate, not on a shotgun certificate.

Firearms safety is subject to the same guidance as that given in deer best practice guidance¹

Shot placement

A boar has two main vital zones, areas inside the body where a bullet will cause a rapid death. these are:

The heart and lungs (chest shot)

This is the preferred target area as it is by far the largest. The centre is just above the heart. From outside the animal, the aim point for an animal standing broadside is in a vertical line with the foreleg and 1/3 of the way up the body, see Fig 1. If the nearside leg is forward this may avoid the bullet striking the leg before the chest, potentially resulting in a cleaner shot. For angled shots the aim point should be adapted to ensure that the bullet still passes through the heart area. Shots at more than 30 degrees either side of broadside should not be attempted.

The brain (head shot)

The brain is located very high in the head roughly in line with front of the root of the ears. A shot to the brain is lethal but the brain is a very small target area and there is a higher risk of wounding than with a chest shot. For this reason head shots are not recommended. However, at close range a head shot from the front, preferably angled downwards into the body is the preferred method for humane dispatch. Larger boar may have a significantly thickened skull and a head shot from the side could be considered.

Shooting from high seats

Wild boar are often shot from high seats, sometimes at short range. As the target gets closer (say 30m or less) the bullet path is likely to become progressively steeper. To compensate for this the shooter should aim slightly higher on the body to ensure that the bullet passes through the centre of the vital zone. When using telescopic sights, for very close shots less than 25 metres, the bullet will strike progressively lower as the range decreases because



Fig 2. aimpoint for a frontal brain shot

of the difference in height between the sight and the muzzle. The aim point will again have to be higher to compensate for this.

Night shooting

Because of their nocturnal habits wild boar are often shot at night. This should only be attempted under bright moonlight or with spotlights using standard telescopic sights, or using image intensifying rifle sights in poorer light. Boar very quickly become wary of spotlighting using artificial light.

Only rifles of the recommended calibre should be used and only from a stable shooting position such as a high seat.

The target and a safe background must be clearly identified before a shot is taken and safe shooting areas should have been thoroughly checked out in daylight beforehand.

Shooting females

Where the aim is to maintain or reduced population numbers it will be necessary to shoot female boar since they are responsible for annual recruitment to the population.

As far as is practicable the shooting of female boar known or suspected to have dependant young should be avoided.

If circumstances require such a female boar to be shot, every reasonable effort should be made to kill any dependant young before, or immediately afterwards.

Baiting

Artificial baits (usually maize) can be used to attract boar to safe shooting areas. Because the productivity of breeding sows is heavily dependent on feeding conditions, amounts of bait used must be kept to a minimum to avoid artificially increasing breeding potential.

Baited sites also give an opportunity to monitor population size and can make selective culling easier. Baited sites should be shot infrequently as boar will quickly become wary of frequent use.

The extent to which wild boar will respond to baits will depend on a number of factors including the time of year, the natural food supply, the natural wariness of boar, and competition for the bait from non-target species.

Baits should not be placed in sites where attracting boar would aggravate boar damage or nuisance, or cause a danger to the public e.g. near highways.

Dogs

The guidance given for the use of dogs for deer¹ applies in large part to wild boar. Dogs can be used to flush or locate wild boar, to locate shot carcasses and to find injured boar. The use of dogs for these purposes is governed by the Hunting Act 2004². The number of dogs in use at any one time is limited to two. There are other conditions that apply but these are within the normal course of legal boar shooting.

Because wild boar may injure dogs it is advisable to keep dogs on a leash unless the owner is certain that the dog is sufficiently experienced to avoid injury, or that it can be called to heel at any time. Protective body harnesses are available for dogs which are used to work with boar.

Humane dispatch

For humane dispatch of sick or injured boar a rifle of the calibre recommended above is preferred for boar that are standing still. When using telescopic sights at close range, compensate for the fact that the bullet could strike low at up to 25 metres because of the difference in position of the sights and the muzzle.

Injured adult wild boar can be very unpredictable and even dangerous. It is recommended that two persons are present when following up injured adult boar, and that the leader carries a shotgun in case the boar runs. The other should carry a rifle. Both firearms should be ready for use but in a safe condition.

It is important that both persons are aware of the condition of the firearms and that the shooter is in front when the shot is taken.

If possible the approach should be made from the rear and from downwind.

It is advisable to shoot from a safe distance i.e. not less than 5 metres, with a rifle or rifled slug, rather than approach too closely. At very close quarters or in confined spaces a shotgun using AAA or larger shot may be more convenient. If a shotgun has to be used on a running boar the distance should be no more than 20 metres with the chest as the aim point.

For static targets at close range the preferred point of aim should be the head, otherwise the chest.

A safe background for shooting is essential in all cases

Further Info

¹ England and Wales Deer Best Practice guides www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk

² Hunting Act - http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040037_en_1

Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police, 2002 at <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/operational-policing/HO-Firearms-Guidance.pdf>