



FIND OFF TONK

All the good hunters rave on about their dogs finding off the ute and how they hunt out on loops. It was a bit of a mystery to me about how to teach my team of Bull Arabs to do this. I tried it unsuccessfully several times on different properties and then one day it just started to happen. I attribute this to sheer numbers of pigs that I got up the dogs and from here they learnt the rest with exposure to this type of hunting. Good breeding of dogs comes in here as their brothers and sisters were already finding off the back of the ute. It's lazy mans hunting to me as I like to walk the creek systems with my dogs and keep fit in the process but it is spectacular to hear them howling in the back as we head down the tracks in second gear at 30km's an hour. I pull up and unclip them when I can see their noses working hard.

One morning Fred Lederer and I got up early and left camp to head 20kms down some dirt tracks. We wanted to see if we could find this mob of 50 pigs that had been seen by the station Managers wife

as she dropped her young lad off at the highway bus stop the morning before. She reckoned they were heading toward the mango farm for some water as they had some dams their for irrigation supply. We knew that pigs were creatures of habit until disturbed so we tried to get to them at the same time and same spot along the track where they had been seen crossing. As we left camp, my two Bull Arabs Duke and Chewy were plated up and ready to do battle against this mob. We only drove 3 kms from camp when the dogs started howling. Duke was going off his head and we were next to a dry creek bed with a 5 ft dropoff on either side. I said to Fred shall we let em off here as I didn't know whether we were better off trying to catchup with the mob some 17 kms further down the track or go for this pig sign here. He said 'let's go for it' so I did and we just could not get over how quickly they flew off the back and covered the dry creek bed like it was flat manicured grass. These Bull Arabs shock me from time to time with

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT KLEMENT

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their sheer athleticism. They get this from the English Short Pointer and the speed is evident from the greyhound. We got out with the torches and ran in the direction of the dogs (much slower) and heard one hell of a hitup. By the time I got there some 800 mtrs later I saw Duke getting driven by this massive pig and he flew backwards in the air about 2 feet and I saw the pig really get under him with it's snout. It blew me away and then I saw Chewy swinging off an ear whilst Duke recomposed himself and went back in to grab the other ear. I waited for them to hold good and when the moment was just right, I got in behind the pig and grabbed

the legs. This pig had some fight and was trying to kick me like many before but I just held tight and leaned back. The proportions of the pig were awesome. The guts were nearly a metre wide and the length was 6 foot or so. I knew I couldn't tip this pig over sideways due to the sheer weight, so I damn well ran the pig over it's own head like Rob Mills had taught me from Coonabarabran. It's a sure fire way to tip a big pig but being 6 foot 4 helps aswell. The pig went down and I held a leg whilst leaning a knee on it's mid section. Then out came my new 27cm long sticker that I got from Les at Pig Dog Supplies and I plunged it into the side behind it's shoulder. After a minute of composure, Fred and I spun out at what had just happened. We were so happy as we did not expect to catch this whopper so close to camp. The value of the dogs was proven again as we would have never got this pig if we were shooting and driving or walking. Fred was impressed again with the dog team and we loaded the pig into the back of Tonka and headed to where the mob was. When we got to the spot we scoured the area and found nothing so this pig became extra special to us that day. We then headed to Kybrook Aboriginal community and I boned the meat out for the community. There was an old time countryman in another community on the other side of town so we took a leg to him as he loves wild pork. The community was very happy and it was great to be in a place where pig hunters were welcome for a change.