

The Los Angeles Silhouette Club

DOGS – The unfriendly Kind

By: Jim Taylor

The big mangy black dog came sneaking in the barnyard with murder on his mind. He apparently had been watching where my chickens roosted and decided to have supper. I had just come in from the barn when my wife yelled, "Jim! There's a dog in the chicken pen!" My single action .45 Colt was laying on the table and I grabbed it as I ran past and out the door. I could hear squawking coming from the chicken pen and hoped I was in time. Just as I came to the corner of the barn the rooster ran out of the pen, closely pursued by the big black dog. In his excitement the dog did not see me, intent as he was upon the rooster. I crouched down by the corner of the barn and as the rooster ran past me I raised up and fired an SSK 270 gr. slug into the chest of the oncoming dog. He yelped and turned away from me and I fired again, this time into the side of his chest. The dog began to holler and flop around on the ground. He was apparently trying to get away, but his body wasn't working right by that time. After he had thrashed or flopped around about 15 feet I was upon him and put a finisher in his head.

Growing up on a ranch we used our guns for a number of jobs, one of which was to protect the livestock and animals from marauding critters. This included dogs and feral cats. And while the cat population in itself was a problem at times, the dogs gave us the worst fits. Our neighbor lost 3 cows and their calves during calving to wild or mean dogs in a single attack one Spring. We usually either wore our guns every day or else had them handy in the truck or on the tractor. If on horseback we sometimes carried a rifle in a scabbard also. The last few years if I had a rifle along it was the .32-20 Marlin Model 1894CL which worked well on dogs. The foreman of a ranch next to us carried a Remington bolt-action rifle in .222 Remington. It was a great dog-stopper also.

One morning as I was enjoying my wake-up coffee I heard dogs barking and cows bawling. My 18 1/2" 12 ga. was setting next to the door and I grabbed it as I ran out. One barrel had a hand-loaded round ball and one barrel had a 3" Magnum BB. As I ran up over the hill behind the house the barking got louder. Looking down below me as I crested the hill I could see 2 dogs chasing the cows, which were bawling in panic. I took about an 80 yard shot at one of the dogs with the round ball load but it was a clean miss. At the shot they broke away from the cattle, one running south and the other running towards me. I watched it - a large German Shepherd - with the shotgun at the ready. Dimly in the back of my mind I registered a shot towards the south but I was concentrating on the dog running at me. At about 30 yards he saw me and without slowing down started to circle away from me. I let him have the load of BB and at the shot he instantly went stiff and fell over. As I stood there realizing I had no more ammo I heard a horse coming. Looking around I saw the foreman

of the ranch ride up and put a finisher in the head of the dog I had just shot. He got off his horse and pulled the collar off the dog, then came over to me. He congratulated me on the shot I just made and said he got the other dog with his .222 Remington rifle. He took the collars off the dogs and filed complaints against the dog owners. The law stated that any dog that had been "wounding, chasing or harassing" livestock could be hunted and killed. The dog owners are liable for any damages their animals do to the livestock.

Lest anyone think me an animal hater, let me explain that while we have dogs and cats of our own around the place, there is a big difference between a pet, a guard and a thief. The raiding dogs were many times wild dogs of several generations. Sometimes they were "town" dogs that had been dumped by irresponsible owners. They were hungry, probably scared, and trying to make it on their own in a hostile environment. Because they chose to prey on our livelihood, we protected ourselves from them. I will not abide a dog that will chase and harass livestock. Not even a dog of my own.

The usual gun I had on was either a .22 Ruger Single Six or one of my .45 Colts, either a Ruger, Colt or some Colt "clone". At times we have had a rifle or shotgun handy, but the handgun was mostly used as it was easier to carry while working and was more "out of the way" than any of the long guns. The .22 will do a good job if the bullet is placed correctly. This is not always possible in every circumstance. The roundnose .22 Long Rifle will drop a critter quickly if the hit is in the spine or brain. Hit other areas, even the heart, and the animal can last quite a long time. I have shot several dogs with the .22 that came back weeks later looking none the worse. The .22 hollow-point or the SGB will do a much better job, though if the body weight is much over 40 pounds it can get a bit "iffy". Of the 35 or 36 dogs I shot one year, about 20 of them were killed with the .22 Long Rifle. Many ran off quite a ways before dropping. Cats can be tough critters to stop also, but that is another story.

I have not had much experience using the .357 Magnum. What little I have had seems to indicate to me that the 125 gr. JHP would be the best bullet. I recently shot a dog in our pens with the .357. The load was the Hornady 158 gr. XTP at about 1450 fps. The sideways shots gave complete penetration with exit wounds about dime-size. The one full-length body shot did not exit. The dog came at me after I had emptied the gun and I had to whack it on the head with the pistol to knock it down. In truth looking back at it I think it was just trying to get out the gate where I was standing. But I had to get the .22 to finish it which upset me. I was not real happy with the performance of the .357, though much of the problem was most likely my shooting and the fact that the dog was very excited. It seems to me that if an animal is scared, excited or in some kind of "frenzy", they are a lot harder to stop than if they do not know you are there. At least that has generally been my experience.

I shot one German Shepherd with the Colt Combat Commander in 9mm. The

shot was at about 20 yards or so in my Bull pen. The dog was sideways to me and did not know I was there. The first shot dropped him immediately. The load was the Black Hills 147 gr. JHP. He started to yelp and bite at the wound and I shot him again, this load being the 147gr. CCI Gold Dot JHP. I fired twice more into him but most likely would not have needed to as he was done. The exit wounds were about the same as the .357, dime-sized. He never did get up after the initial hit.

The .45 ACP has been a good dog-stopper, though I have had some run off after being hit hard in the body. A little too far back behind the lungs and they will run quite a ways. I was out in the hills and heard a cow bellowing and some dogs barking. As I came over the hill I saw in the valley down below a cow backed into a corner by two dogs. The dogs saw me and ran off. I followed a while but lost them, so I sat down and blew on my varmint call. Soon they came trotting up the trail with their tongues hanging out. I whacked the first one with my .45 and before I could shoot again the other disappeared. The first one rolled around then got up yelping and ran off. I watched him for several hundred yards but never did get close to him again. I also used a Colt Officer's ACP .45 on several dogs that came after my daughter and I while we were on the horses. I hit the lead dog and they both ran back into the brush. I jumped my horse up onto a ridge and shot at the dogs several times before they got out of range. I did hear another "whop" as a bullet landed on one, but neither of them stopped before they were out of sight. The load was a CCI 200 gr. JHP, and while it surprised me that the dog ran off, I am sure the hit I made was a poor one.

These dogs attacked us in broad daylight while we were mounted and while we had our dog with us. He was a small dog and had uncommon good sense. When these bandits came out of the brush at us growling, ole George just advanced to the rear until he was on the offside of my horse where he waited until I got my gun in action. The wild dogs never paid him any mind and went directly for my daughter's horse (she was in the lead) until my first shot interrupted their plans.

The .45 Colt has been a good one for me, mainly because I shot it the most and used it more than anything except the .22 Single Six. The loads I used were usually the SSK 270 cast bullet at around 1200 fps. I tried some of the Federal Hollow Point lead bullet factory loads but did not like them. I also tried the Winchester Silver-Tips and did not like them either. Mostly because of personal preference for cast bullets. The above- mentioned loads did drop the critters they were fired into, but I did not like the lack of penetration. The cast bullet penetrated much better which is important if you happened to have to shoot a bigger animal than a dog. When out in the back country I liked to be prepared for most anything I may run into, be it a dog, coyote, bear or other large creature that needed to be shot. I also did not like the lighter bullets out in the open country since shots tended to be fairly long. And while I do use heavier bullets a lot, I found the SSK bullet held up well for long shots. The best group I

ever shot at 150 yards was with the SSK bullet and 18.5 gr. of 2400. The group measured a little over 4" if memory serves me correctly. Paco Kelly and I were doing some target shooting at 150 and 200 yards and he saw me shoot that group so he may remember. The gun was an open-sighted 8" barreled Ruger .45 that Linebaugh had customized for me. I remember the shooting was done sitting on the ground, leaning back against the tire on my truck and resting the gun over my knees.

I was riding out into the grazing lands one day and about 5 miles from the house I heard some cows bawling and dogs barking. As I got closer I saw the cows on a ridge above me, running up to the north. I rode the horse on up the mountain and around, coming in from the east through the cover of a small grove of trees. Just then some of the cows came trotting back past me and behind them were 15 or so dogs, chasing them. All kinds of dogs. I sure was wishing I had a pump shotgun about that time! I left the horse tied to a tree and slipped up closer to where the dogs would pass. When they were in front of me I opened up on them. I know I got 3, two killed on the spot and one running off on 3 legs, howling. I may have hit one or two more but I was not sure. I do not remember for sure what the load was, but I believe it was a cast 300 gr. bullet. I have seen dog packs in the mountains, but this was the largest I had ever run into.

In years past the ranchers would get together every once in awhile and have a drive, rounding up as many of the wild dogs as possible and killing them. Today with many ranchers having dropped out, been pushed out or starved out, the wild dog population seems to be on the rise. Because the areas are remote and access is limited, the only people who run into them are backpackers, hunters and cowboys. Not everyone understands what it is like to run onto these creatures. They have nothing in common with "Fifi" who sleeps on a pillow in your house. They usually are mangy, filthy, and have no fear of man. My hunting partner of old, Jim Mork, was on foot up in the hills looking for a deer. As he came up the trail through some thick brush two wild dogs came at him, hackles up and teeth bared. Jim dropped one with his "06" and before he could chamber the next round the other dog was gone. There was no barking. And that is common among the wild ones. They learned long ago not to advertise their presence. It is one reason we never traveled those hills and mountains without a gun.

I have used my Model 94 30-30 to stop a dog that was running the cows and it worked right well. The shot was a fairly long one, near 100 yards, and he was so intent on the cows he was chasing that he did not notice me. I caught him quartering at me and took out about half of his chest. He just flopped, never knowing what hit him. The load was a handload with a 140 gr. jacketed bullet. The bullet was a 150 gr. spitzer that I had cut the nose off and flattened so it would be safe to use through the magazine. It opened really quickly on coyotes was a pretty decent varmint bullet.

As much as I like the performance of the rifle, the handgun has been used more than the rifle or shotgun simply because they were "at hand". The only other handgun that I've used other than those mentioned above is the .475 Linebaugh. I was hunting on Mark Hampton's SHOW-ME SAFARIS Game Ranch some years ago and dropped a mangy little mongrel that had been chasing some of Mark's sheep. The dog did not weigh 20 pounds and the big 400 gr. slug took him directly in the chest, exiting through the spine. It was a slight case of overkill! Since I prefer overkill to the alternative I was real tickled with how it worked.

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