

Evening Pigeons

Eddie Jones embarks on an evening pigeon clear up on one of his local farm permissions



Today, I was out on a new permission gained from another mole job when I helped out my buddy, Alan; a farm of a good 250 acres of land with the odd rabbit around and few squirrels that roam around its bordering trees. The land is large, so you'd think there would be an abundance of quarry, but here in Wales, it is not the case. On many of my grounds that cover thousands of acres, you will find no more quarry on it than I would on one 200-acre farm back in the Midlands. It's crazy when you think about it; it is so remote and the conditions are perfect for these

Eddies cycles the sidelever to load up in readiness for the next chance of a shot

pests to thrive and it's mad when the places are not overrun. I walked around pretty much all the fields on this particular farm, and didn't get within shooting distance of anything. It's a challenge for sure, and one that I will have to work out to get any sort of success in the future.

When I'd previously visited the farm with Alan, I noticed a lot of pigeon droppings around some of the sheds. I didn't see any pigeons on that day, but when I pulled into the yard on this occasion, I did notice two sitting on one of the roofs. They were sitting right in the

middle, and I didn't want to shoot them and leave them dead in view on the roof, so I decided to leave them until later in the afternoon, by which time I hoped that they would have settled back inside the shed for later roosting.

BE CAREFUL!

The tool for the job today was the Air Arms Ultimate Sporter in .177 calibre. Usually, around the sheds, I would use the .22, but as my main aim was stalking around fields for the pigeons and maybe squirrels, I wanted something with the flatter trajectory. All that being said, the





.177 is perfect for the job of feral pigeon shooting, but you must be mindful with it. A feral pigeon's body and head are not the strongest, so you need to take care regarding over-penetration; farmers do not like holes in shed roofs, or sides, so make sure you have a suitable back stop whenever you take your shot.

You can shoot feral pigeons any time of the day on a farm, but I usually like to leave it as late as possible because the pigeons are more likely to stay around after you start shooting, rather than fly out of the building and off to another farm. Leaving it late means that the buildings are pretty dark inside,

ABOVE: I could see the pigeon inside the shed but it had no idea it was being watched



RIGHT: Pigeon droppings carry disease, this is not good for the farmers

so you need a good optic to help gather as much light as possible to see the pigeons in the rafters. I use the Hawke Sidewinder for this; the 30mm tube and 50mm front lens do a great job by letting you see later on in the day, when other inferior scopes might struggle. The side-wheel parallax is a great option on the Sidewinder, and when shooting at different ranges in the sheds, you can easily focus in on a target without having to reach forward whilst holding the scope to your eye. This makes for quicker focus and a faster shot rate – just what you need when there are a few pigeons to go at.



FIRST PEST

By around 4.30pm, I was heading back to the farm, and as I approached the last field before the sheds, I noticed around six pigeons flying above them. I was more than happy to see that there were more pigeons around now because this would increase my chances of bagging a couple more than expected, but there had to be more because of the amount of droppings on the machinery and bales stored in one of the sheds.

I had now reached the shed opposite to where I had seen a couple land, so I crept up to the corner of the shed, looked over and

ABOVE LEFT: Shooting free hand is the hardest shot to take, even worse if you have an audience



could see one sitting right on the apex. By resting the Ultimate against the shed, I had a nice steady shot and the pigeon fell off the roof to the floor. It is always a satisfying feeling when I get my first pest – you know you and the rifle are working together to get a result.

CLEAR VIEW

As I hit the first pigeon, the other one that I had seen flipped up off the roof, and it was just behind the first, but lower down out of sight. I thought it was going to take off, but it didn't. Instead, it seemed to follow the first pigeon down to where it had fallen, and then flew

in the open end of the shed and settled in the roof space.

This was going to be more of a challenge; the shed wasn't very high, and open along the front. I looked through the Sidewinder and I could see it from where I'd taken the first shot. It was just obscured by one of the support posts, so I moved over to rest on a gate for a better shot. The pigeon was around 35 yards away, but in clear view. The Sidewinder has a 30-yard zero so not much was needed for holdover, and I took the shot after I'd placed the cross just above its heart. Without any fuss, the second pigeon was on the floor stone dead.

After picking up the two pigeons, I headed over to take a look into another big shed where the bales of silage were kept. I was hidden pretty well behind a post covered in ivy, so had no worries of pigeons being spooked. After a good search, I noticed one sitting tight, right in the void of the beams just under the roof. The Sidewinder was starting to struggle a bit now, even with its enviable performance in low light because I was outside in the lighter area and the shed was darker, so the transition was not the best to see anything inside it. Even with those conditions, though, I was still able to drop the third pigeon and it fell like a stone to the concrete floor.

NEARLY MISSED ONE!

As I was going over to claim my prize, the farmer arrived and asked how I was getting on. He told me the pigeons were making so much mess that it was becoming a health hazard with the amount of droppings. He said he was aware that there weren't any great numbers, but what there were certainly caused problems.

As we were talking, a pigeon

RIGHT: I saw five pigeons flying and got five. A good result to end what was a poor day in the fields.



decided to fly from one beam to another – it was just above the entrance so I hadn't seen it from outside. I looked through the Sidewinder, but it was a little grainy now, so the farmer turned on the light in the shed, and what a transformation! I could see it like the sun was shining. The only problem was the farmer, who was now watching me, and I was shooting free hand. We all know shooting free hand is the hardest shot to take, and

MAIN: A handful of ferals before it got dark

with an audience it is even harder.

Anyway, I took the safest shot through the heart and the pigeon fell to the ground. The farmer was amazed at how quiet and effective my air rifle was, and he was also impressed with the shot, which I said was just routine for me because I was such a professional! Well, you have to milk it when they actually witness the greatness of us hunting experts in action.

RIGHT ON CUE

The last shot came in the last shed, the farmer took me to where he normally sees one when he's in there – he turned on the light, and right on cue, there it was. I was a bit more confident here because I had the gate to rest on. Taking this shot was faultless, and my last pigeon was down. After I'd picked them all up, I was gifted with more shooting at night, protecting his lambs from foxes. He did have someone else doing the job, but he didn't turn up that often, so it's another place I can get my name on, and maybe secure some more ground from – if I do my job. ■

