

You go in and Grab 'em!



I first came across the mob when I was out with my nephew Kahurangi Fraider (14) who had entered the Claris Sports Club pig hunting competition. It's for residents only as Great Barrier Island isn't big enough to hold a national comp and there aren't enough pigs.

I think it's more of a numbers control thing to keep DOC from eradicating them all. We depend a lot on pigs for the table (as well as seafood) because there's no butcher's shop, supermarket or power here. Supplies are flown in or barged in a couple of times a week when the weather is fine.

Kahu and I had a route planned but like most hunts, things can change quickly. We had decided to change course and have lunch up the hill a bit when Whiskey started bailing. He's my one dog special; five or six years old and a purebred

island mongrel made up of Border collie/pointer/blue heeler/kelpie/Smithfield. Straightaway my pup in training was off. Honey is an eight month old bitch I bought from John Lockley. She's been on five bails already (her first at five months) and one kill and she has always gone for the arse or balls.

As we were running towards the bail, we heard Honey break out just minutes after Whiskey's first bark. When we got there, we could see a black boar bailed up under an old puriri tree that grew horizontally out the side of the hill. Honey was bailing on our side of the puriri and Whiskey was bailing on the other side.

I said to Kahu "Get ready to go in and grab it – I'll get the camera out." Maybe the pig felt pressured on our side because he decided to bolt out Whiskey's side all of a sudden. Bad move – wham! Whiskey launched forward and grabbed the boar by the ear. Like lightning, Honey went straight for his balls and made him sit down, squealing.

Without thinking, Kahu dived under the puriri and grabbed the boar's back legs. My nephew was so happy, he smiled...frowned...smiled...and frowned as the pig kicked violently.



"Don't you let him go Kahu – I want to get some photos and a video!" Kahu asked me if he could have the pig so I told him he had to stick it, gut it and carry it out, which he was quite happy to do.

After he'd stuck it, gutted and hog tied it, we headed home. It got dark and we still had an hour or two to go when Kahu said "Hey Uncle, can we leave this pig here and pick it up tomorrow?"

"No" I told him "we'll take it out tonight and try another spot tomorrow!" I felt the pig we had wasn't big enough for him to win the comp.

After beautiful roast pork (one I had caught two days before on the way to work) and a good night's sleep, we were off to our next spot to try our luck. A couple of hours later, we were there and sure enough – wham! This time there was a lot of really deep grunting going on so I quickly grabbed Honey as she ran past me towards the commotion and gave her to Kahu to hold. She was still a bit young to get a hiding and my god, by the sounds of those pigs making the noise - they were massive. And there wasn't just one or two of them.

“Take Honey right back up where we just came from Kahu and tie her up and then come down here and get ready to grab one” I said.

“I'm not coming down there Uncle - stuff that - they sound massive!” said Kahu.

“Well, get ready to climb a tree then - they sound like they're coming towards us!” All of a sudden, five massive pigs slowly appeared out of the thick bracken fern under the manuka. Two of them would have been at least 200lb, easy. They were all over 100 lbs, even the sow. I'd never seen anything like it before.



I could hear Honey's barking getting further away so I assumed Kahu was running in the other direction. There were four huge boars circling a sow and they were all moving as a group. I thought big boars roamed on their own and fought with other boars for turf and sows. It was like they had never seen a dog or a human before and they weren't scared at all.

I gave Whiskey the command “When you're ready – get 'em!” Just seconds later, he launched towards the closest boar and grabbed his ear. The other pigs freaked but they didn't run away - they turned towards Whiskey and charged at him to help their mate. Whiskey let go and ran around the other side and bailed.

No matter what, they were locals and they weren't going anywhere. Whiskey has caught big pigs before on his own - even a 200+lb - but a mob of them? Thinking about it now, I reckon he was intimidated by the number of big ones we found because after that, he wouldn't go in and hold. He just looked at me as if to say “You go in and grab 'em!”

It was like a Mexican standoff. I thought about it for a while and I realised they had a nice warm bit of bush with plenty of food and a healthy keen sow - they weren't going to bugged off too far. One of the advantages of not having too many dogs is less pressure on the pigs. They don't tend to run so easily.

With time getting on, we had to get back home to scrub up and get Kahu and his pig to the weigh in before 5pm so I called Whiskey to me and put him on a rope and we backed off. Still, the pigs just stayed there, not phased at all. I told Kahu we were running out of time so we'd come back tomorrow with some backup and get the biggest one.

All the way back, Kahu kept saying “Imagine if we'd caught the biggest one, eh?”

I said to him “That would have been cheating unless you went in and grabbed it!” We got home just in time to jump in the van and take Kahu's pig to the weigh in, with support from his nana and poppa, mum and dad and my brother.



Out of five teams of three hunters and 11 individuals, Kahu (only 14) won the comp with his boar weighing 59 lbs. I just laughed with happiness for him - he had done the hard yards and got it. Second prize was won by a younger girl, Shelby with a 53 lber - yeah!

I bet the older ones were disappointed as a lot of them are competitive trophy hunters, not hunter/gatherers. Not that I'm against them at all, I just think our food sources on the island aren't as plentiful as they used to be and they should be managed.

I'm so happy for our young boys and girls out there hunting and putting food on the table, whether it's rabbits, fish, shellfish, birds or pork. Thanks to DOC, there are no goats or deer anymore.

We didn't go hunting the next day because we celebrated too much for Kahu that night.

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