

Aiming Points

And How Bullets Kill

The number of sambar stags I have seen run off without even flinching after being hit with a .375H&H, is proof enough for me that greater power is no substitute for poor bullet placement. It is not muzzle energy that kills sambar and all other animals for that matter. Death is caused by the destruction of vital tissue, especially lung and heart tissue, resulting in sudden and massive blood loss, or the striking of the spine causing paralysis.

Author

In forming my view about aiming points for sambar I have drawn upon my experiences whilst guiding and whilst hunting recreationally for sambar during which time I have seen thirty or so mature stags killed with a variety of cartridges from .270 to .375 H&H. I have also considered the opinions of many other successful sambar hunters, who between them, have shot hundreds of sambar including at least eighty mature stags.

I have compared these experiences with opinions expressed in *The Sharp Shooter*, *The Perfect Shot* and *Rifles for Africa*. These are the three best books I am aware of on this subject. *The Sharp Shooter* by Matt Grant devotes one chapter to 'Why Bullets Kill' and another to 'Efficient Game Killing'. The soundly based theories expounded are based upon the results of more than 2000 post mortems conducted over twenty years. *The Perfect Shot* is on how bullets kill and aiming points for game animals and compliments *The Sharp Shooter* perfectly. Written by Kevin Robertson who has the rare qualifications of being both a Zimbabwean professional hunter and a qualified veterinarian, the entire book is devoted to this subject and contains skeleton and vital organ overlays of many of Africa's most popular game species. *Rifles for Africa* by Gregor Woods provides practical information about cartridges and projectiles for African antelope similar in size to sambar stags. These books would be a valuable addition to any hunter's library.

The Vital Organs

Of an animal's many organs, four are essential to their well-being and consequently are commonly referred to by hunters as the *vital* organs. These include the brain, the spinal cord and its associated vertebral column, the heart and the lungs

To kill sambar, indeed any animal quickly, relatively painlessly and humanely, a hunter has an ethical responsibility to have a basic understanding of how these vital organs function, their anatomical position within an animal's body and how bullets affect them and ultimately cause death. The anatomical position of the vital organs in sambar is the same as in all species of deer and antelope including the larger herbivores such as buffalo and elephant.

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The Brain Shot, Frontal Position

The brain is an animal's most essential organ and in the words of Kevin Robertson... *it is the computer that controls, drives and directs all the bodily functions. An animal will die only when its brain has ceased to function.* To function, the brain requires a large amount of oxygen which is transported there via a large blood supply. The brain is well protected by the hard and thick bone of the skull, but of all the vital organs it is the most susceptible to shock and can be shut-down instantly with a well-placed shot even from the low-powered .22 rimfire.

