

GUIDE TO YOUTH SWINE PROJECTS

Start by setting your goals: Do you want to participate, be competitive, or try to win? You will purchase your pigs, and will feed and work accordingly to meet your goals.

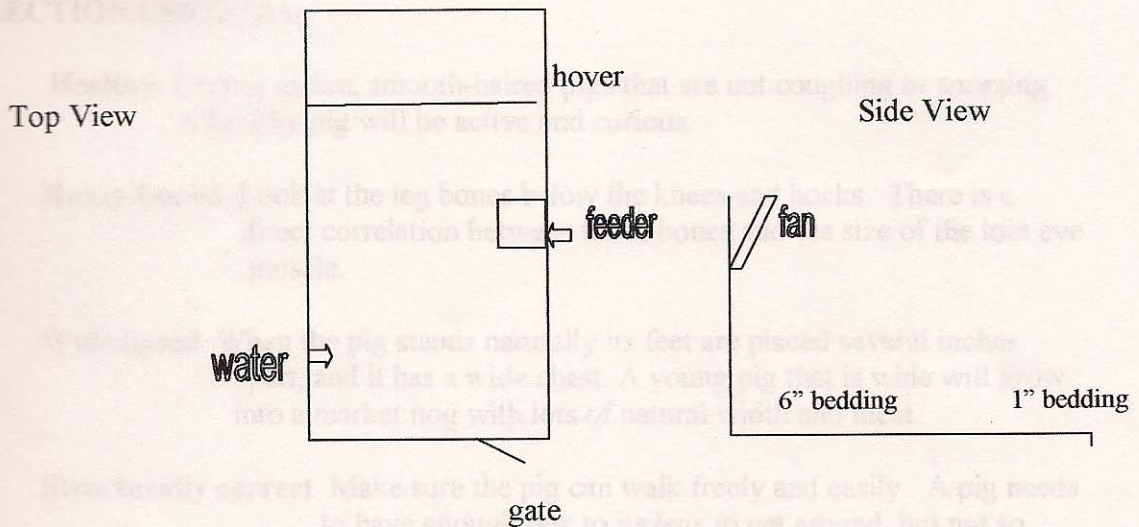
PARTS TO A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT:

- * Preparation
- * Selection
- * Management
- * Feeding
- * Showmanship
- * Marketing

**PREPARATION + GENETICS + MANAGEMENT +
NUTRITION + SHOWMANSHIP =
CHAMPION PERFORMANCE**

*PRESENTED BY NEW YORK PORK PRODUCERS
COMPILED BY MIKE & KAREN HARGRAVE*

Prepare the pen before you get your pigs.



Ideal pen set up: boxed area at the top is a hover or low ceiling for the pigs to sleep under during cool weather. The warm dry area in the back should have about 6 inches of bedding. The cool wet area by the water and gate will only have about 1 inch of bedding. Note the water is located away from the sleeping area. This will be the dunging area for your pigs. Pigs will “toilet train” better in a rectangular pen that’s at least twice as long as it is wide.

The side view of the pen shows the placement of a fan to cool the pigs in warm weather, and the hover has been removed.

Essential components:

- source of clean water
- dry and draft free
- hover for cool weather
- fan for hot weather
- elevated feeder
- fly control
- easy access gate
- shavings/bedding

Preferred Temperature ranges:

30 – 75 lb. pigs	65 – 80
75 – 150 lb. pigs	60 - 75
150 – 270 lb. pigs	50 – 75

Space Requirements:

8 sq. ft/pig minimum indoors
 or 5 sq ft/pig inside + 15 sq ft outside
 self feeders: 1 space/4 pigs
 waterers: 1 space/15 pigs

Adjust the height of the feeder from the floor as your pigs grow. Eating with their heads up will keep their heads up in the show ring. You can purchase an adjustable feeder, or you can just put 2x4’s under it at first. As your pigs grow use 4x4’s under the feeder, then use 6x4’s, or similar increases. Just remember that whatever you use to raise the feeder must be fastened there or your pigs will remove it.

How to Figure how Much I Can Spend for a Feeder Pig:

If you Sell 1 market hog at:

250 lbs. at \$1.40/lb. = \$350.00

Estimated Expenses Per Pig:

Feed costs:

Figured at \$15/50 lbs. x 700 lbs. = -210.00

Worming cost = -1.00

Health papers = -10.00

Trucking and misc. = -15.00

Bedding cost = -5.00

Amount available to purchase a feeder pig: = \$109.00

Remember, these figures are only estimates to learn how to do the figuring. Also remember, any higher selling price, or savings in the expenses will add to your profits.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Healthy Choose active, smooth-haired pigs that are not coughing or sneezing. A healthy pig will be active and curious.

Heavy-boned Look at the leg bones below the knees and hocks. There is a direct correlation between those bones and the size of the loin eye muscle.

Wide based When the pig stands naturally its feet are placed several inches apart, and it has a wide chest. A young pig that is wide will grow into a market hog with lots of natural width and meat.

Structurally correct Make sure the pig can walk freely and easily. A pig needs to have enough flex to its legs to get around, but not so that it is weak in its joints. A pig who can hop up easily and run to the feeder or water is much more likely to do so often and will grow faster because of it.

Muscle definition This means the young pig has lots of expression of shape in its muscle structure and that it is lean enough to see that groove down its back defining the loin and the fullness of the hams.

Balance The pig who puts all these features together is well balanced and should grow into a well-proportioned market hog.

How big a pig do I buy? Know how many days till your show, or weigh in date. A pig will gain an average of 1.5 to 1.75 lbs. per day from feeder pig to market hog. Multiply this by the number of days you have, to estimate how much your pig will gain. Subtract the total pounds estimated to gain from the weight you want your pig to be at the show. This will tell you how big a pig you need.

Here's an example: The weight limits at State Fair are 220 to 280 lbs. You are aiming for 250 lbs. (right in the middle.) You have 100 days till the show. At 1.5 lbs. per day a pig will gain 150 lbs. and at 1.75 a pig will gain 175 lbs. Then 250 lbs. minus 150 is 100 lbs. while 250 minus 175 equals 75. So you need a pig between 75 and 100 lbs.

MANAGEMENT TIPS:

- **Clean the pen daily.** This prevents a fly population that could leave bites on your pig. It is also time spent with your pigs making them friendly and trusting you. This is also good neighbor relations to not let your pen get dirty and smelly.
- **Exercise** your pigs by walking them ½ to 1 hour each day. Walking builds muscle, keeps them lean and fit, and builds stamina for the show, as well as trains them for the show. A well trained pig looks so much nicer for the judge and to the spectators.
- **Limit the sunlight exposure** to prevent sunburn. Sunburn will make the pig's skin dry and scaly, and sometimes the pigs will go off feed.
- **Wash pigs** weekly or more often, especially the last 30-60 days. Washing makes the pig's skin healthier and shinier. If you have a light colored pig you may have to use a stain fighting shampoo.
- **Keep track of feed used** in your self feeder. To avoid wasting expensive feed make sure only about 1/3 of the pan area of your feeder is covered with grain. If it is less than 1/3 the pigs will not be getting enough to eat.
- **Clean water** is a must. Pigs will consume 1.5 times the amount of water as compared to feed. Nipple waterers should be set so water flows at the rate of 1 quart per minute. Measure this by filling an 8 oz. cup and timing it. It will only take 15 seconds.

Weigh your pigs regularly. Then you will know how your pig is growing. At 45 days before the show weigh your pig. At this point it will gain about 1.9 pounds per day. Estimate the projected finished weight: number of days to the show x 1.9 lbs. = projected gain. Projected gain + today's weight = projected finished weight. Is this where you want the pig to be? If the projected weight is higher than you want you can limit the feed or add bulk feeds such as oats, beet pulp, or other such fillers. If the projected weight is too low you can add fat or oils to your feed to increase the energy. Remember to weigh the pigs again often so you can monitor their growth, and readjust the feed program if need be.

FEEDING RECOMMENDATIONS

WATER:

- A pig's body is 80% water at birth and 50 % water by the show, so it needs lots of water.
- The water needs to be fresh and clean.
- Keep the water out of direct sunlight to prevent heating it and growth of bacteria.
- Clean the holding tank regularly if the water is stored there.
- Pigs will consume 1 ½ times the amount of water than feed so be sure there is plenty of water.
- Water from nipples should flow at 1 quart per minute. (i.e.: an 8 oz. cup will fill in 15 seconds.)

FEED:

- Pigs are simple stomached animals that can't digest whole kernels of grain well. They need grains ground into small particles. The smaller the particle, the better the pig can utilize the nutrients. Pelleted feeds are actually very small particles compressed into a pellet, so they are very efficient. Make sure the rations contain the vitamins and minerals the pig needs to grow.
- For the first 10 pounds of growth:
Feed a ration that is medicated with a broad spectrum enteric (stomach/gut) and respiratory control. You have just taken this pig from its home, traveled with 55 mile an hour winds in its face, changed its water, changed its feed, and maybe even put it in with strange pigs from other farms. That's a lot of stress and that little pig will need some help battling it.
- From 50 to 150 lbs:
Recommendations are 18-20% crude protein (CP), 1.2% lysine, & 5.5% fat. Deworm at this stage. If the pigs are outside in dirt lots or on a bedded pack they probably need worming each month.
- From 150 to 270 lbs:
High lean genetics: 16-18% CP, 1.0% lysine, & 5.5% fat.
Too lean, hard muscle: 14-16% CP, .9% lysine, & 5.5% fat.

These numbers come from Sunglo Feeds show pig feed program. Feed for your pig's genetic potential so he "can be all he can be." More muscular pigs will need the higher protein and lysine levels, and maybe some added fat if they are very lean and hard muscled.

Basics of Judging Pigs

Judge from the ground up. A pig that stands wide when viewed from the rear will have more inner ham muscle which indicates more natural muscling throughout. A wide-chested pig will have more body capacity. A heavily boned leg will also indicate more natural muscling.

Structural correctness is important. Look at the angles from the hip to the hock to the pasterns. Also look at the angles from the shoulder to the knees to the pasterns. Too wide of an angle will show the pig is too straight-legged, and will be apt to have lameness problems. Too small of an angle will be a crooked-legged pig whose hind feet will tuck up under the animal and cause feet and leg problems, and the front legs will have knee problems. Structure may not seem important in market animals, but painful feet and legs will make it difficult for the animals to get to the feed and water, affecting growth rate, and possibly caused strained muscles which would mean carcass bruising and trim. A level topline, high tail setting, and feet set squarely on the corners all indicate skeletal correctness.

Muscle is meat. Meat is the product we are selling when we sell pigs. The pig should be wide topped, with a plump loin showing a clean, natural bulge and a rounded, trim loin edge. We want a deep bodied, long sided pig that yields a big bacon. The pig should have a long, full ham that is trim at its base. This shows lots of muscle without an excess of fat. About .7 inches of fat is the ideal. Less fat than that will result in dry meat and small bacons; more will be carcass waste.

Balance and Extension put it all together. Balance is the combination of all the desirable traits. A balanced pig has muscle and leanness, soundness and extension, and is proportional. In other words, the ideal pig is wide-based and square, flexible and free-moving, long, clean-fronted and long, deep-bodied, with plenty of natural muscling, and substance of bone.

With gilts consider the reproduction. Gilts need to be large framed and free moving, structurally correct, and feminine. In addition, they must have at least 6 (7 is better) well developed, evenly spaced teats on a side, with at least 3 of those in front of the navel. A gilt should have a well developed vulva that does not tip up.

5 Basics of Showing Pigs

1. Train your pig and practice at home, tapping the pig gently on the side of the head to steer it.
2. You and your pig must be clean; carry a small brush to keep it that way.
3. Keep the pig between you and the judge, keeping your eyes on the judge, but also watch where the pig is going.
4. Keep your pig's nose away from the other pig's noses to avoid fights.
5. Drive your pig at a steady pace through gaps in the group to give the judge the side, front, and rear views of your pig.

10 Steps to Good Showmanship

1. Showmanship begins at home. Train your pig to walk at a slow, steady pace with you beside it, and to turn at a light tap on the side of its face. Gain the pig's trust by spending time in the pen. Start by using the pipe in the pen getting the pig to respond and turn. As you and your pig become good at walking and turning, then walk your pig outside its pen and in different directions so it trusts you to guide it. *(The firm training whacks are better done at home than in front of fair spectators!)*
2. You and your pig must move as a unit. A well trained pig will not run away, but will walk calmly beside you, go where you want it to, and will show itself off nicely.
3. Keep your eyes on the judge as well as your pig, and the other pigs. You do this by keeping your pig between you and the judge at all times.
4. Show the judge all views. Walk your pig across the ring so the judge gets a good side view of it. Then drive your pig at the judge for a front view, and away so the judge gets a good rear view.
5. Stay about 10-12 feet away from the judge. Of course, this will vary, especially when giving the front and rear views, but maintain this distance as an average.
6. Control your pig from the shoulders forward. Steer the pig by taps on the side of the face or ears. If your pig stops, chances are something distracted it. Rather than hit it on the hind legs, try turning the pig away from whatever was the distraction. Your pig will move on and you can resume showing.
7. Protect your pig from fights. The best way is to prevent the fights by having your pig trained to respond to you and by keeping your pig's nose away from other pigs. Fights start when pigs are nose to nose with strangers.
8. Carry a small brush in your pocket. Make sure you use the brush to keep your pig clean, but not so much it is a distraction to the judge.
9. Be considerate, alert, and yet calm. Be aware of where the other showman and their pigs are so you don't run into them or cause fights. Don't worry about your parents and friends outside the ring. Their coaching is done and it is time for you and your pig to show what you have learned. Staying calm will help your pig behave and show well.
10. Have fun, congratulate the winners, and thank the judge. Also, be sure you pay attention to the judge's reasons. You will probably learn something.

WHY AND HOW TO TRAIN PIGS FOR SHOWMANSHIP

Why bother with showmanship?

- **SAFETY:** While some people find it entertaining to see a pig run across the show ring, it is a grave danger for the kids who are in the ring. Pigs who are running like that are not looking where they are going and could easily hurt a child that happens to be in their way. The unruly pig could run into the gate and hurt itself. It also gets the other pigs riled up and starts fights among the pigs.
- **Saves time:** When the pigs will come out of their pens, walk to the ring without balking, and move around the ring so the judge can get a good look at them, a show will get done at least 1/3 faster. We all know how tired the exhibitors get when a show takes a long time.
- **Saves energy and effort:** A pig show is a lot easier on everyone if they don't have to be pushing pigs out of pens or down the aisle to the ring, or running to break up fights between pigs in the class.
- **Public relations:** When we are showing our pigs *we* are really on exhibit. We don't want someone from PETA putting a cell phone video of a 4-Her hitting an uncooperative pig with their cane till it leaves welts on Youtube. That would certainly promote that all livestock people are abusive.
- **Looks:** Pigs look their best if they are on a steady walk moving around the ring with their head up, rather than tearing sideways across the ring, or fighting.

How to train your pig:

- Start by spending time with your pig. Get it used to you being beside it and touching it. Walk around the pen at your pig's side and scratch its back and ears.
- Introduce the show tool, whether it is a pipe, whip, or cane. Let the pig smell it, but don't let the pig think it is a toy and play with it. Tap the side of the pig's neck to get it to turn. Practice walking and guiding the pig with the show tool by doing figure 8's in the pen.
- Walk your pig outside its pen. Go different directions each time you go out. Make sure you are steering the pig, not just following where it goes.
- Walk your pig around a variety of objects so it will trust you and go where ever you direct it to go.
- Practice going in and out of different pens or fencing so your pig will come out of and go in the pens and show ring at the fair without balking. You can even train the pig to walk up a ramp into a truck or onto a trailer, and back out.
- Praise the pig when it learns a new step or does something right. Pigs know when they've pleased you just like a dog and they even like treats.
- If you spend just 15 – 20 minutes a day working with your pig neither you nor the pig will get tired of it and you will have a well trained, cooperative pig.

SELL YOUR PROJECT

Keep in mind that you are selling yourself and your work as well as a pig.

Search out potential buyers. Travel to feed dealers, tractor dealers, and other businesses, even the insurance agents with your parents. Talk to friends and neighbors, or even teachers at school. Tell them about your project and feel out if they might be interested in buying. If you think they might be interested give them more information and contact them a few more times throughout the project.

Point out benefits to you. Talk about the responsibility of caring for your animals, and the knowledge you have gained. A lot of life skills are learned from animal projects, and the extras you can participate in such as showmanship contests, public presentations, judging, and skill-a-thon competitions. Time management and money management, as well as record keeping and defending your decisions are valuable tools, whether you are raising pigs or interviewing for a job.

Know your prices. Know what your costs are for the project, so you will know how much money you need to break even. Keep track of your animal's weight so you can accurately estimate what it will weigh at sale time. Then you can quote a reasonable per pound price. You should also know what your sale has averaged in the past, so you can have an estimated cost for your potential buyer. It helps if you have an estimate what the processing fees will be for your buyer so they will have an idea of their total cost.

Know your product. Be informative about the meat you are trying to sell. Your buyer will want to know about how much meat they can expect, and about how much of it will be from each primal cut.

Point out the benefit to the buyer. You should be able to tell your buyer things such as what you fed your animal, and your animal's age. Then your buyer can compare your product to what he or she gets from the grocery store. Also, anything they spend above the current market value of your animal can be used as a contribution on their taxes.

Thank your buyer. It is *very* important to send a thank you note to your buyer. Handwritten notes are best because it shows the buyer you took time to appreciate him or her. Sending a gift or plant is a nice touch. A Christmas card, or even another note next spring is also nice because your buyer will know you remember who bought your animal and that you still appreciate it.