

# How to Raise and Show Pigs

Producing a champion show pig requires a lot of hard work, careful selection, a good home and feeding program, and effective fitting and showing. All six steps must be followed in order to produce a champion.

## SELECTION

While considering what to look for in a pig, be completely familiar with the rules and classes at the shows where you plan to exhibit your pig. Know the weight limits and class divisions. Also, know the prize monies and sale opportunities at the different shows. This information will help you in deciding the breed, age, and price of the pig you select.

### **\*AGE**

The weight limits for most shows are 200 to 260 pounds, and you should select a pig that will be approximately 6 months old by the show date. The rate of growth and weight limits at the show will determine how old the pig should be at the time of purchase. The pig's genetics and our management and nutrition program will determine the growth rate of the pig.

### **\*BREED**

Most grand champions come from divisions with the strongest competition. Learn the rules of the shows so that you know which breeds show together and which breeds show separately. Be sure you know the rules for crossbred entries also.

### **\*PRICE**

There is a variation in sale policies and prices at livestock shows, so having a good understanding of the prize monies and sale possibilities for the exhibits where you plan to show is a must. This will help you in deciding what you can afford to pay for your pig.

### **\*CHOOSING A PIG**

Know the history of your pig. The parents of your pig will determine the rate of gain, growth, frame size, soundness, and whether or not you will have a pig with a well muscled carcass and little fat.

### **\*BODY VOLUME**

Your top priority should be body volume. The best indicator of gaining ability is body capacity. (To figure body capacity, multiply length by width by depth.) Choose a pig with good width of skeleton, deep chest and rear flank, and adequate length of body. The frame size should be large enough to allow the pig to grow to heavy weights while limiting excess fat.

### **\*SKELETAL STRUCTURE**

To obtain satisfactory performance from your breeding swine in confinement, they must have sound feet and legs. Adequate slope to the shoulders and good cushion for the front and hind legs will help the pig get up and down on slotted floors. The most important factor of skeletal soundness is a reasonably level topline.

### **\*MUSCLE STRUCTURE**

The most desired muscle structure is thick and loose. Try to avoid tight, round, or bunched muscling. The two best indicators of good muscling in a young pig are prominence of the forearm and width and depth of the ham. Avoid pigs with short, steep rumps and narrow, thin hams. Check the pig for extra length of rump, squareness and thickness of the rump, and depth from the tail to the base of the ham.

### **\*HIGH LEAN:FAT RATIO**

Select a pig that will have less than 1.30" of fat at 250 pounds. When viewed from the side, look for a clean, well turned top; clean, trim crotch; and a prominent, clean shoulder and underline.

### **\*SERIOUS FAULTS IN PIGS**

Crooked hind legs, hind legs that are too straight, bucked knees, short-bodied, stiff-gaited, and weak behind the shoulders. All of these faults will become worse with increased age and weight gain.

## **THE PIG PEN**

A well-drained location is a must. A 12 ft. by 50 ft. pen for two is adequate, but one twice as long would be more desirable. An 8 ft. by 12 ft. shed open to the south will aid in keeping out cold, north winds, snow and rain. A wood floor in the shed will help to prevent the pigs from rooting deep holes and allow you to clean the area easily. Remember, you do not have to spend a lot of money on the pen, just provide adequate space and comfort.

### **\*GOOD START**

The first few days the pig is home, it is critical to provide comfortable, dry, draft-free quarters. This will help to reduce the stress from changing environments and being hauled. An injection of antibiotics will help prevent secondary respiratory problems in an animal that is unusually stressed. Check for lice and treat immediately. To completely eliminate the problem, a second treatment may be necessary 14 to 21 days after the first. After about 7 to 10 days, the pig should be doing better, and it is time to treat for roundworms. To eliminate the migrating larvae, retreat in 21 days.



## **FEEDING**

For excellent results, begin feeding a pig grower or starter formula up to 75 pounds of body weight. After pigs reach 75 pounds, switch to a grower/finisher. Self-feeding is recommended as long as possible for rapid growth and development. However, six to eight weeks prior to the show, pig should be weighed weekly to determine the amount of gain required. If pigs are gaining too fast, hand-feeding a measured amount divided into two or three daily feedings may be necessary. As a general rule, four pounds of feed will produce one pound of gain.

### **\*MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR HAND-FEEDING**

1. Feed on a regular schedule at least twice a day.
2. Limit the daily water intake to the amount mixed with the feed. A pig requires about 2 lb. of water for each pound of feed. (During summer, provide more water.)
3. Provide daily exercise to develop stamina and muscle tone. (Stamina will enable the pig to hold up under the stress and rigors of the showing.)
4. Provide a diet and feeding management program to give freshness and fullness when the pig is exhibited.
5. Plan your holding action early so that you can feed the pig about 8 lb. a day the last 5 to 7 days before show time.
6. Plan your feeding program so that you can feed and water the pig at the show to obtain the desired fill.

## **TRAINING**

Do not try to control your pig through fear. You have to win a pig's confidence. An excellent opportunity to gain the pig's trust is during the hand-feeding period. Do not make a pet of your pig, but do gently scratch or brush him during feeding. The three signals you must teach your pig are:

1. To move him forward, tap him firmly on the side.
2. To make a left turn, apply gently pressure to the right side of the head.
3. For a right turn, apply the same pressure to the left side of the head.

Drive the pig at least once a day during the last 15 to 20 days of the feeding period. Study each pig from all angles to decide which angle will show him to an advantage.



## **FITTING**

A natural, attractive appearance is the thing to seek in any fitted animal. You can secure this by cleanliness and proper trimming and grooming of the hair and coat. The best way to have a good hair coat is clean, dry, well-bedded sleeping quarters; good nutrition; and grooming.

### **\*BRUSHING AND WASHING**

1. To train the hair to lie down properly and add bloom, brush the hair daily for the last 30 days.
2. Wash the pig at least twice before the show with the first bath about 1 to 2 weeks before the show.
3. When washing the pig, check carefully for mange, lice, and any other skin disorders and get them corrected before the show.
4. Wash the pig the day before the show either at home or at the show.
5. Wet the pig's entire body.
6. Lather the pig with plenty of soap; then, using a stiff brush, vigorously scrub the entire body.
7. Rinse completely. Be sure all soap is removed.
8. Brush the hair until totally dry.

## **SHOWING**

### **\*AT THE SHOW**

1. After finding your pen, put 1 to 2 inches of wood shavings or grass hay in the pen.
2. Let the pig rest.
3. Feed approximately half of the normal ration. It might be a good idea to check with your advisor on how much and when to feed and water. Remember, hungry pigs rarely become sick.
4. Give the pig plenty of exercise morning and night by taking him out of the pen. This is also a good time to allow him to relieve himself so that you maintain a more attractive exhibit.
5. Do not leave food or water in the pen. Before show day, watch your pig eat and decide when he looks best. A pig receiving too much feed will have a heavy waisty middle. A pig receiving too little feed will appear gaunt.

### **\*SHOW TIME**

1. Know the rules of the show. Check judging schedule to know when the pig will be exhibited.
2. Keep up with how the show is moving so that you and the pig are ready on time.
3. Brush sand or shavings from the pig and remove dust with a wet rag 15 to 30 minutes before your class is called.
4. Brush the pig with a fine bristled brush.
5. Use a fine mist of water from a spray bottle to obtain the desired sheen to the hair.
6. Be prompt and drive the pig carefully and quietly into the show ring when your class is called.
7. Do not unnecessarily disturb or confuse the pig.
8. Carry a small brush in your pocket and a short whip in your hand.

### **\*IN THE RING**

1. Keep your pig away from the fence, out of the corners, and away from large groups of pigs.
2. Keep one eye on the pig and one eye on the judge at all times.
3. Keep the pig between you and the judge.
4. Drive your pig slowly.
5. Keep the pig under control at all times.
6. About 15 feet from the judge, keep the pig open.
7. Move quietly and quickly, keeping your pig in position.
8. Keep hands and brush off pig's back.
9. Never hit the pig on the rump. This will cause him to straighten his tail and have a steep rumped appearance. A light tap on the side should work.

**A poor job of showing my ruin your chances of winning. A good job could result in placing two to three notches higher.**

**Remember at all times to be a credit to your organization. Always be courteous to other showmen and officials. Always win or lose gracefully and fairly.**

