



Over a Century of Innovation & Trust

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AFIA Feed Facility of the Year



Over a Century of Innovation & Trust



Managing Show Pigs

From Selection to
Show Day

Producing a champion show pig takes months of preparation and sound decision making before show day. While genetics play a large role in the potential for performance, the ultimate level of success comes down to the exhibitor's dedication to proper animal management, nutrition, training, and showmanship.

Selection

Before going to purchase your project pig, make sure to familiarize yourself with the rules and classes at the shows where you will be exhibiting your pig. Weight limits, class division, prize money, and sale opportunities are all factors that will affect your decision.

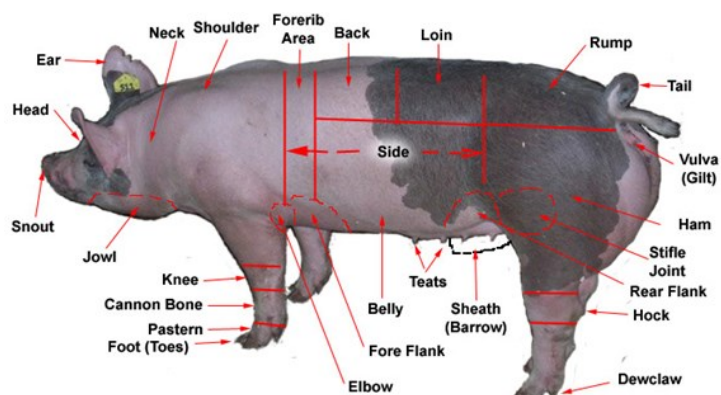
Age – Select a pig that will be around 6 months old by show day. Most shows have a weight limit of 200 – 260 lbs. Growth rate and weight limits will determine how old your pig should be at purchase. Genetics and management will also play a key role in growth rate.

Breed – Know the rules of the show and which breeds will be shown together (also be aware of the rules for crossbred swine). Grand champions tend to come from divisions with the strongest competition.

Price – Be aware of prize monies and sale possibilities for your pig. This will factor in to what you can afford to pay for your project.

Selecting – Meet the parents. They will give you an idea of frame size, soundness, and carcass characteristics.

Body Volume – This is critical. Body capacity is the best predictor of gain ability. $\text{Body capacity} = \text{pig length} \times \text{pig width} \times \text{pig depth}$. Pick a pig that is wide and long with a deep chest. We want the frame to be large enough to allow for heavy growth while limiting excess fat.



questions regarding weight, gender, breed, age, anatomy, carcass composition, swine management, nutrition, or marketing systems

Arrival – Upon arriving at the show, find your pen and bed the area with 1 – 2 inches of wood shavings or grass hay. Unload your pig and allow it to rest. Feed them approximately half of their normal ration (check with your advisor on when and how much they recommend to feed and water). Exercise your pig in the morning and evening. This will also give them time to relieve themselves outside and not in the show ring. Do NOT leave food or water in the pen. Before show day, watch your pig as it eats and pull the feed away when they look best. An overfed pig will appear too wide in the middle and an underfed pig will appear too thin.



Show Time – Be on time and be ready! Prior to the show (15 – 30 minutes) brush any sand or shavings from the pig and remove dust with a damp rag. Use a fine bristled brush and a fine mist of water from a spray bottle to obtain the right sheen on the hair. When it comes time to enter, drive the pig carefully and quietly into the ring. Carry a short whip in your hand to gently guide your pig. Some show ring tips include:

1. Keep your pig away from the fence, out of corners, and away from larger groups of pigs.
2. Keep eyes on your pig and the judge at all times.
3. Keep the pig between you and the judge. Don't hide your hard work!
4. Drive your pig slowly. This isn't a race. You should have control over your pig at all times.
5. Keep hands and brush off the pigs back and never hit the pig on the rump. It will cause them to lose form and alter their appearance. Light taps on the side work better.
6. Always win or lose gracefully.



Preparing the Show Box

Having the correct tools on hand and in one place will make your life much easier. When choosing a show box, consider one that can be locked for security. Supplies to pack in or with your show box include:

1. Brush
2. Mild soap
3. Water hose
4. Spray bottle
5. Work clothes/boots
6. Crop or cane
(whichever you've been using with your pig)
7. Wash cloths and towels
8. Rubber feed trough
9. Shovel
10. Water bucket
11. Feed
12. Bedding (if not provided by the show)

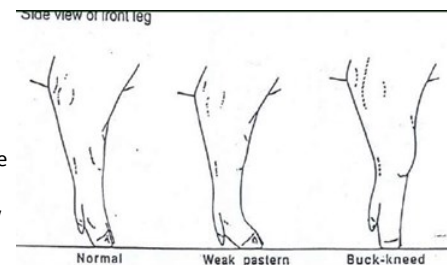


Showing

After months of preparation, show day is here. This is the culmination of all the hours you've put into your project pig. It is critical that you do your part to make them look their best in that ring. Make sure you are familiar with the rules of the show. Check the schedule ahead of time to know when your pig will be showing. Also, make sure you have packed your show clothes and boots. No T-shirts, tuck in your shirt, wear a belt, and be clean. No barn clothes.

Make sure to also bring all registration paperwork and health forms. Keep these in a folder or plastic sleeve to keep them clean and protected. Make sure to know about your project animals. Some judges will ask

Body Structure – Sound feet and legs are critical for mobility. Check for a reasonably level topline to determine skeletal soundness. For muscling, judges desire to see thick and loose muscling. Tight or bunched muscling is frowned upon. Indicators of good muscling in young swine are prominence of the forearm and the width and depth of the hams. Serious faults in show pigs are: crooked or too straight hind legs, bucked knees, short-bodied, stiff-gaited, and weak shoulders. Those faults will become worse with age.



Housing

Pig housing does not need to be anything fancy, just functional. The locations must be well drained. A south facing 8' by 12' shed will work to block wind/rain/snow and having a wood or concrete floor in the shed will be easier to clean. Also allow for adequate outdoor access.

Transportation to your pig's new home can be very stressful on their body and make them susceptible to illness. Pay close attention to the health of your pig during this time. If you suspect any respiratory or other health issues contact your veterinarian immediately. This would also be a good time to check for lice, and treat if necessary, and deworm your pig as well.

Nutrition

Younger pigs need more nutrients to grow; therefore feeds made for younger pigs tend to have a higher plane of nutrition. To get maximum growth from your show pigs, feed a starter feed up to 75 lbs of body weight. Then switch to a grower or finisher ration until show (depending on rate of gain and time until show). Allow pigs to self-feed for greatest growth rate and continue up until 6 – 8 weeks prior to show day. At this point, begin weighing the pig weekly to determine the amount of gain required. If the pig is gaining too fast, begin hand feeding a measured amount divided into 2 – 3 meals/day and consider switching to a finishing (less nutrient dense) diet if you have not already done so. You can approximate that 4 lbs of feed will yield 1 lb of gain.

Hand Feeding Tips –

1. Feed on a regular schedule at least twice/day.
2. Exercise pig daily for stamina and muscle tone.
3. Diet should give freshness and fullness when showing.
4. Plan holding action early to allow for pigs to eat 8 lb/day the final 5 – 7 days before show time.
5. Also plan your program to allow for adequate feed and water intake on show day to obtain desired fill.



Training

There are three signals the pig must know:

1. Move forward – firm tap on the side
2. Turn left – apply gentle pressure on the right side of the head
3. Turn right – apply gentle pressure on the left side of the head

Practice driving the pig at least once/day during the last 15 – 20 days of the feeding period. Study your pig to learn its angles. When it comes time to show you will be able to use that to your advantage and show their best side.



Training a show pig is about developing the pig's trust in its handler; it should **never** be about trying to control the animal through fear. A great time to solidify that trust is during the hand feeding process. Gently scratching or brushing the pig during feeding will help to nurture that bond.

Fitting

When fitting an animal, the goal is to achieve a clean, natural appearance. This is accomplished through cleanliness and proper grooming of hair. A solid hair coat is achieved by providing a clean, dry, and well-bedded sleeping area, along with adequate nutrition and grooming.

Fitting Tips –

1. Brush hair daily for last 30 days before show to train it to lie down properly and add bloom.
2. Wash the pig at least twice before the show. The first bath should be given 1 – 2 weeks prior to show.
3. While washing, check the pig for lice, mange, and any other skin issues to provide enough time to address them prior to the show.
4. Avoid getting water in the pig's ears. It will affect their equilibrium.
5. When trimming hairs, clip off all long hair from under the ear a few days ahead of the show.
6. Make sure to wash the pig before the show (either at home or on site)
7. To wash the pig, wet their entire body and then lather them with plenty of soap. Use a stiff brush to briskly scrub their whole body. Rinse thoroughly, and brush the hair until completely dry.

