

Records to Keep

The reasons for keeping records on your market hog projects are to:

- Help you learn more about animals, their rate of growth, the feed they require and their habits.
- Help you plan future projects.
- Determine if you made or lost money and how much.
- Improve your management practices.
- Give you a record of your project activities.

The following information about your market hog project will be helpful and interesting. Use the

4-H Market Livestock Record Book (4-H 1177) to record it.

- The weight of each pig at the start of the project. Weights can be obtained by holding the pig and standing on a bathroom scale, and then subtracting the weight of the person holding the pig from the total. You will learn more about

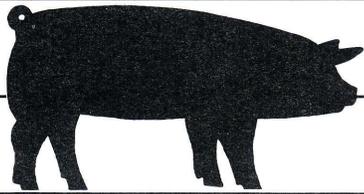
pigs if you weigh yours every 30 days during the project.

- The weight of each hog at the time it is marketed.
- The total cost or value of the pigs at the start of the project.
- The money received from the sale of the hogs.
- The amount of feed used.
- The total cost of medicine and veterinary fees.
- Anything interesting or unusual that happened to your pigs during the project.

From the above information you can:

- Make a chart or graph showing how fast each pig grew.
- Figure your hogs' average daily gain.
- Figure the feed cost per unit-of-gain.
- Figure the total cost per pound of hogs sold (cost of pigs + cost of feed + other expenses ÷ by weight of hogs sold).





Selecting Pigs for Your Project

Sources of Feeder Pigs

You can obtain feeder pigs from several sources, including:

- Your own or your parents' herd
- A neighbor's or friend's purebred or commercial herd
- Special feeder pig sales
- Regular feeder pig sales at weekly auctions

Feeder pigs are generally sold by the head, rather than by the pound. Therefore, it is necessary to have a good idea of how much the feeder pigs you are considering weigh before buying them. An acceptable weight-for-age standard for a feeder pig is 40 pounds at 8 to 10 weeks of age. If they weigh less than that, they may be stunted and fail to perform satisfactorily.

If you feed home-raised pigs, weigh them when they start on feed and figure their value using current market price. You will need this information to complete your livestock record book.

Feeder Pig Prices

Feeder pig prices depend a great deal on the price of market hogs when you buy your feeder pigs. A general rule is that the price per pound of feeder pigs will average two times the price of market hogs. When you have the privilege of selecting the top pigs from a large group, you should expect to pay some premium in price.

However, do **not** pay a high price for a pig with the idea that this alone will assure you of winning a grand championship. It takes good feeding and a lot of hard work, along with the right kind of pigs and good showmanship, to have a grand champion.

Where to Get the Money

Your money problems are the same as those of any other swine producer: "Where will I get the money to buy and raise my feeder pigs?" and "How much money will I need?"

There are probably three sources of money available to you:

- Your savings account
- Borrowing from your parents
- Borrowing from your bank

If you borrow the money from your parents, pay them interest as if you were borrowing from a bank. Keep the transaction on a businesslike basis.

Borrowing from your local bank will give you good business training. Have your parents go with you. Your banker will need to know three things:

- How much money will you need?
- How long will you need the money?
- How will you repay your loan if your pigs die or your project loses money?

If you need to borrow money to buy the feed for a project pig, you need to know how much feed your pig will eat. If your 40-pound feeder pig will be sold at 230 pounds, it will need to gain 190 pounds. You can estimate that it will take 3.5 pounds of feed per pound of gain. Therefore, your pig will probably need to eat about 665 pounds of feed.

If your feed costs 9 cents per pound, you will need to borrow \$59.85 ($665 \times \0.09) for feed, plus whatever you expect to pay for your feeder pig.

You will pay interest on the money you borrow from the bank. If you borrow \$130 per pig to finance your project, you will need the money for about five months (for example, from April to August). If the bank charges 12 percent annual interest, you will pay a 5 percent interest charge for the period of time you have the money (12 percent annual rate: one percent per month \times five months = 5 percent interest charge). At this interest rate, you will pay \$6.50 ($\$130 \times .05$) in interest. So, when you repay the bank, you will need to pay them \$136.50 (the original \$130 you borrowed plus \$6.50 in interest).

Paying off your loan when it is due will help your reputation as a borrower. This is called your credit rating. Whether you obtain the money from your parents or borrow it from a bank, it is important to pay your debts by their due dates. Honesty

and integrity are important to you as a 4-H'er and as a citizen.

Pig Identification

Very often pigs won't have any easily recognizable markings or traits that allow you to identify them. Consequently, swine producers use other methods to identify their pigs. Ear tags can be used, but they are often lost and may be difficult to read. Many producers depend on ear notching because it is a permanent method of pig identification. As a swine producer, you should learn and use the ear notching system.

Knowing a few basic rules will make understanding the universal ear notching system much easier.

1. Notches in the pig's right ear represent its litter number. Notches in the pig's left ear are its individual number. Under this system, every pig in a litter has the same notch(es) in the right ear, while no two pigs from the same litter should have the same notch(es) in the left ear.

2. For ear notching, the pig's ear is divided into two halves—the tip half and the base half. By using the top and bottom edge of each half of the ear, four areas are available for notching. A notch in the lower edge of the base half is assigned a value of one, while a notch in the lower edge of the tip half is three. A notch in the upper edge of the tip half indicates a 9, and each notch in the upper edge of the base half is valued at 27. A notch in

the very tip is assigned a value of 81 (see fig. 1).

3. The value of each notch in the right ear added together represents the pig's litter number; likewise, the values of all notches in the left ear are added to determine the pig's individual number.

4. There should never be more than two notches in any particular area of a pig's ear.

Proper Weight of Feeder Pigs

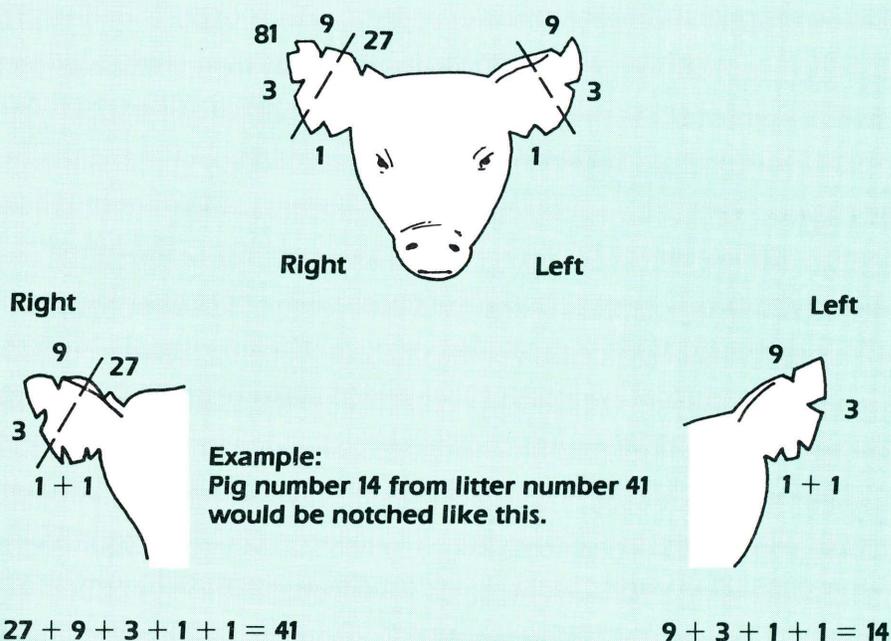
Select pigs that will have the proper amount of finish (fat cover) when they weigh 200 to 240 pounds. This is the most desirable market weight.

Healthy feeder pigs will gain from 1.5 to 1.8 pounds per day if fed properly. Many times, 4-H project pigs will gain over 2 pounds per day because they are raised in small groups and receive tender loving care.

Feeder pigs that weigh about 50 pounds at the start of the project usually make the best 4-H market hogs.

If your hogs are to be marketed at your county fair or show, you may need to consider the date of this event in selecting your feeder pigs. For example, if you have 106 days to feed your pigs, you will need to start your project with feeder pigs that weigh at least 50 pounds (106×1.6 pounds per day = 170 pounds gain; 50 pounds + 170 pounds gain = 220-pound market hog). If the pigs gain 1.7 pounds per day, their

Figure 1. Universal ear notching system.



finished weights will be 230 pounds. Both fall in the desired range of market weights.

Using the above example, you can decide when you should select or buy your feeder pigs to be at their best when you sell them. If you select a heavier pig or if you believe your pigs will gain more rapidly, fewer days will be required. Under those conditions, you can select your pigs or start your project later. Keeping accurate records the first year will help you plan your next project more accurately.

Evaluating Feeder Pigs

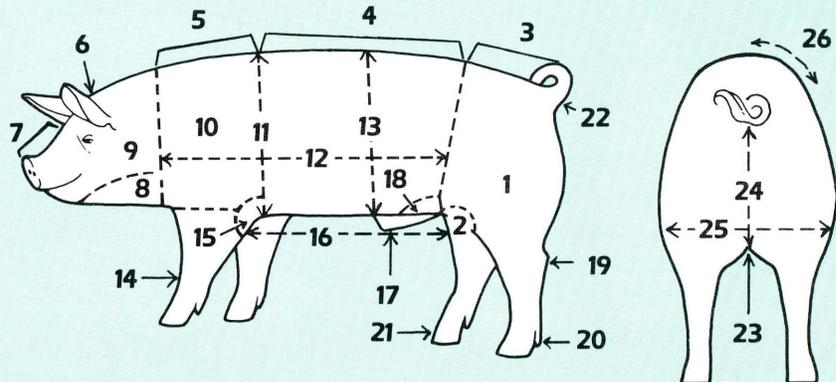
When evaluating live pigs, two major areas must be considered: body composition and structural soundness. In order to properly discuss the evaluation of live pigs, you should learn the parts of the live hog (see fig. 2). Knowing these parts will help you recognize quality feeder pigs and market hogs.

Body Composition

Consumers demand pork that is meaty with a minimum amount of fat. Therefore, it should be your goal to raise lean, meaty hogs. When selecting feeder pigs it's hard to predict which pigs will be lean and meaty at market weight. Nonetheless, knowing the desirable market hog body composition traits will help you pick desirable feeder pigs.

There are only two things evaluated when determining body composition: degree of muscling and finish. When viewed from the front, the muscles of the ham region should be long and thick, with the

Figure 2. Parts of a hog.



- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ham | 14. Knee |
| 2. Stifle region of ham | 15. Elbow |
| 3. Rump | 16. Underline |
| 4. Loin | 17. Sheath |
| 5. Shoulders | 18. Rear flank |
| 6. Poll | 19. Hock |
| 7. Face | 20. Dew claw |
| 8. Jowl | 21. Pastern |
| 9. Neck | 22. Tail setting |
| 10. Shoulder | 23. Seam or crotch |
| 11. Heartgirth | 24. Depth of seam or crotch |
| 12. Length of side | 25. Width of stifle |
| 13. Depth of side | 26. Turn over loin edge |

thickest point through the stifle. There should be a good deal of spread or width between the hind legs, indicating ham muscling. The loin should have natural thickness and expression of muscling (muscle thickness) when viewed from the front or rear.

When evaluating the degree of finish on a live hog, only the fat a pig deposits over its muscles can be seen. Consequently, it is important to determine whether the thickness you see is due to muscle or fat.

A lean hog will be trim in the jowl and elbow pocket with little fat deposited in its crotch or seam. It

will exhibit a desirable turn over the loin. On the other hand, the loin of a fat hog will appear flat and square due to fat accumulation along the loin edge. In addition, a fat hog may exhibit a heavy jowl, wasty elbow pocket, countersunk tailsetting and no shoulder blade movement (see fig. 3).

Structural Soundness

When evaluating structural soundness, you should look primarily at the pig's feet and legs, body cavity and topline. The pig's shoulder and front leg structures are very closely associated. Sloping shoulders give the front legs plenty of flex and