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Producing Feeder Pigs

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

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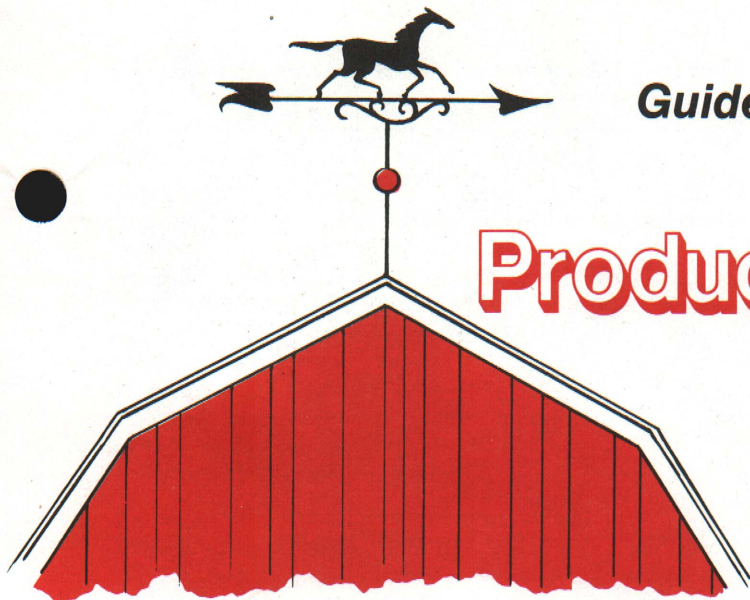
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Producing Feeder Pigs



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Producing feeder pigs involves maintaining a breeding herd, farrowing and growing pigs to between 35-60 pounds for sale to farmers who finish them to slaughter weights. The enterprise fits the small farm where year-round daily labor is available to care for the animals.

The first step is to establish a production schedule for the care of foundation stock during breeding, gestation and farrowing and care of the baby pigs to sale weight. This takes approximately six months to complete and is repeated until two litters of pigs are produced in a year. Approximately 25 to 35 hours of labor are required to handle one sow and two litters of pigs each year depending upon the number of animals in the herd and facilities used—or about 300 hours of labor for a 10-sow enterprise.

Management requirements for handling a farrowing operation are higher than for finishing feeder pigs. Close attention must be given to sanitation, disease control, feed rations and general management and care of the breeding stock and baby pigs. A series of management activities are necessary to insure the production of large litters of high quality feeder pigs. To be successful, the manager should learn these husbandry skills and enjoy working with the animals.

Most small farms have facilities that can be remodeled for the enterprise. During breeding and gestation, a sow needs 15 square feet of building floor area plus an outside yard for feeding and exercise. Sows are usually farrowed in pens or crates which hold the sow and litter until the pigs are weaned at about 5 weeks of age. The pigs are then grown in a pen where each pig needs about 3 square feet of floor space.

A 10-sow enterprise requires about 150 square feet of floor space for the breeding herd, 5 pens or crates if two groups of sows are farrowed at staggered times and 120 square feet of pen space for growing the approximately 40 pigs farrowed from each group of 5 sows. Facilities are rotated for the

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two groups of sows and used four times a year from the two-litter pig production system.

An alternative production system is field farrowing one litter per year from a group of sows. In this system, quonset shelters are used for the breeding herd and spring farrowing is done in the field with quonset shelters. Pigs are also grown under field conditions.

The feed grain requirements for a farrowing operation on a per pig basis are considerably less than the needs for finishing feeder pigs. A sow and two litters require approximately 50 bushels of corn to produce 16 40-pound feeder pigs. Minimal amounts of pasture are needed for the breeding stock unless field farrowing is the production system. In this case, one acre of pasture is needed to farrow 7 sows. Usually, small farms produce the feed grains rather than purchase corn; however, corn can be purchased.

Investments for the Enterprise

Capital investments in breeding stock, buildings, equipment and operating capital are needed to produce feeder pigs. Approximately \$1,500 to \$2,500 is required to purchase gilts and a boar to operate a

GUIDELINES

- Feeder pig production fits on small farms where: (a) year-round labor is available, (b) the manager can develop the knowledge to handle pigs, and enjoys caring for swine, and (c) facilities are available for remodeling to house the animals.
- Purchase quality breeding stock from a reputable swine breeder.
- Acquire the skills needed to manage a breeding herd and baby pigs and perform the required tasks on a timely schedule.
- Purchase a commercially prepared protein supplement to grind with farm-produced feed grains.
- Provide a balanced ration at minimum cost.
- Market 40- to 50-pound feeder pigs at competitive local market outlets.
- Develop a budget to determine expected returns and resource needs.

10-sow unit. The investment varies depending upon the price of breeding stock at the point in which you are going to enter the business. Breeding stock prices generally lead the production and price cycle in slaughter weight hogs. The typical hog cycle is a 3- to 5-year period when prices fall and then recover.

The investment in buildings and equipment depends greatly upon existing facilities on the farm. In a 10-sow operation, up to \$2,000 may be needed for buildings—either to remodel existing facilities or to purchase shelters for field farrowing. Approximately \$1,500 would be needed in equipment such as farrowing crates, waterers, feeders and ventilation equipment and heaters. Operating capital of \$600 to \$800 is needed for production inputs until the first group of feeder pigs is available for market.

Purchasing Breeding Stock

A cross-breeding program using two or three breeds is recognized to be superior in raising feeder pigs. Top quality breeding stock can be purchased from purebred swine breeders who are in the business of producing these animals. Michigan swine breeders prepare a directory of farm operators who have breeding stock for sale. These producers have had their breeding stock evaluated and can provide data indicating performance of their tested animals. You can obtain a copy of this directory from your county Cooperative Extension office or from the Michigan Swine Breeders Association.

Management of the Herd

Breeding herd performance and care of the baby pigs are key factors in successful feeder pig production. Consequently, management must emphasize those practices that provide a high conception rate, large litters, and maintain disease-free animals. A good goal for production volume is 16 to 18 weaned pigs per sow per year on a two-litter system. Production volume requires careful scheduling of facilities and a plan for producing a quality product. Many successful pig producers follow a strict calendar of management activities (Table 1). These management activities revolve around feeding, disease control and care of the sows and pigs.

Marketing Feeder Pigs

Feeder pigs are marketed at about 8 weeks of age, or 40 to 50 pounds, through local market outlets. The most common market outlet is local livestock auctions or sale barns where feeder pigs are sold to farmers who finish the pigs to market weights. Inquire in your local community for the location of the sale barns. Producers also direct-market their feeder pigs to neighbors who finish them to market

TABLE 1. Calendar of management activities for a feeder pig production operation.

Stage	Days from breeding	Management practices	
Pre-breeding-30		Co-mingle gilts with sows or provide for fence-line contact, also provide new boar fence-line contact with sows.	
	-14 to -28	Vaccinate sows for leptos; also, vaccinate for erysipelas if a problem.	
	-7 to -14	Increase feed intake for gilts to 6-7 pounds per gilt per day for 1 to 2 weeks prior to breeding.	
	-2	Spray for lice and mange.	
	Gestation	0	Breed; record known breeding dates.
		21-24	Remove boar.
35 to 60		Pregnancy check, and sell any open females.	
90		Vaccinate sows for erysipelas, if a problem.	
105		Worm sows with broad spectrum wormer. Clean the farrowing house.	
108 to 110		Wash sows with warm water and soap, spray for lice and mange, and move to farrowing house; isolate farrowing house from all visitors. Start hand-feeding 3 to 4 pounds per sow per day; if constipation is a problem, add 20% wheat bran (or other laxative ingredients), and continue until 2 or 3 days after farrowing.	
	112	Prepare auxiliary heat for pigs.	
Farrowing nursery	Days after farrowing	0 to 1	Dip navel cord in mild iodine solution. Clip needle teeth. Cut off tails. Ear notch gilts from good litters of 9 or more pigs. Complete farrowing record, including date, number of pigs farrowed, etc. Observe sows for MMA (mastitis, metritis,agalactia).
		1 to 3	Transfer pigs to equalize litters. Give iron shots.
		1 to 14	Castrate males.
		7 to 10	Provide creep feed for pigs.
		14 to 21	Give second iron shot, if needed.
		28 to 42	Wean pigs and group by size. Move sows and pigs to nursery.
		42	Worm pigs with broad spectrum wormer.

(continued, p. 3)

Table 1. Continued from p. 2.

Days after farrowing	
42	Spray for lice and mange.
56	Select replacement gilts from those ear-notched at birth.
56 to 70	Sell pigs.

Source: David H. Bache and James R. Foster, "Pork Production Systems with Business Analyses: Producing Feeder Pigs (Low-Investment)," *Pork Industry Handbook, Extension Bulletin E-1093*, March 1977, Michigan State University.

weight. Feeder pig prices on a per head basis and other terms of trade are negotiated between the producer and the buyer. Usually, contact is made with buyers through local newspapers.

Feeder pigs that are sold through auctions or sale barns may be graded according to standards established by the USDA. Feeder pig grades are based on two general factors: logical slaughter potential and thriftiness. All thrifty feeder pigs—those that will

gain weight rapidly and efficiently—are grouped according to their logical slaughter potential into either the U.S. # 1, 2, 3 or 4 grade. Unthrifty feeder pigs are labeled U.S. Utility or U.S. Cull depending upon the degree of unthriftiness.

Developing a Budget

A budget represents a projection of the cost and returns for a given action—in this case, producing feeder pigs. Listed in Table 2 are estimates of the various items of receipts and cost for producing feeder pigs for a 10-sow feeder pig production enterprise. The table includes an example showing typical cost and returns and a "your farm" column in which you can record your figures to accurately describe and compare your situation and current market prices. This analysis should help you determine whether the production system fits your small farm operation and whether the returns are adequate for you to produce feeder pigs as one enterprise on your small farm.

TABLE 2. Estimated Receipts and Costs for a 10-Sow Feeder Pig Production Enterprise.

Item	EXAMPLE		YOUR FARM	
	Total (10 Sows)	Per Pig Sold (150 Head)	Total	Per Pig Sold
A. Receipts				
1. Feed pigs (150 hd x \$32/hd)	\$4,800		_____	
2. Sows (4 hd x 4.25 cwt x \$34/cwt)	578		_____	
3. Unbred gilts (1 hd x 3 cwt x \$38/cwt)	114		_____	
4. Boar (1 hd x 4.25 x \$27/cwt)	115		_____	
5. Replacement boar	(300)		_____	
6. Total receipts	\$5,307	\$35.38	_____	_____
B. Direct costs				
1. Feed				
a. Corn (507 bu x \$2.50/bu)	1,268		_____	
b. Supplement (7920 lb x \$.10/lb)	792		_____	
c. Creep (1600 lb x \$.10/lb)	160		_____	
2. Marketing and hauling	250		_____	
3. Veterinary and medicine	160		_____	
4. Utilities	140		_____	
5. Interest on feed (2220 x 10% ÷ 4)	55		_____	
6. Grinding and mixing feed (\$.25/cwt x 363 cwt feed)	90		_____	
7. Misc. (bedding and supplies)	60		_____	
8. Total direct costs	\$2,975	\$19.83	_____	_____
9. Receipts over direct costs (A.6-B.8)	\$2,332	\$15.55	_____	_____
C. Overhead costs				
1. Labor (300 hr x \$5/hr)	\$1,500		_____	
2. Building depreciation	135		_____	
3. Equipment depreciation	150		_____	
4. Misc. (insurance, property taxes and repairs)	120		_____	
5. Total overhead costs	\$1,905	\$12.70	_____	_____
D. Net Margin (B.9 - C.5)	\$ 427	\$ 2.85	_____	_____

TABLE 3. Production Assumptions for a 10-Sow Small Farm Feeder Pig Enterprise.

Item	Production Assumption	Annual Results
Farrowing	2 groups of 5 sows	10 sows
Pigs weaned per sow per year	16	160 pigs weaned
Mortality from weaning to 40 lb	3%	155 pigs at 40 lb.
Pigs selected for replacement gilts	5 pigs	150 pigs sold
Sow culling rate	40%	4 sows sold
Gilt conception rate	80%	1 unbred gilt sold
Boar culling rate	100%	1 boar purchased and sold each year

TABLE 4. Annual Feed Requirements by Livestock Class for a 10-Sow Small Farm Feeder Pig Production Enterprise.

Livestock Class	Animal Numbers	POUNDS FEED PER HEAD		POUNDS FEED FOR ENTERPRISE	
		Corn	Supplement	Corn	Supplement
Sows	10	1,730	440	17,300	4,400
Boar	1	1,920	480	1,920	480
Pigs—gilts to breeding age	5	845	174	4,225	870
Pigs—starter ration	155	32	14	4,960	2,170
Total				28,405	7,920
Pigs—creep feed	160	10 lb per pig		1,600 lb	

The production assumptions for a 10-sow enterprise are given in Table 3. The budget is based on good performance, or 16 pigs weaned per sow per year. Income from the enterprise includes the sale of 150 40-pound feeder pigs at \$32 per head (Table 2). Other income includes breeding stock that are culled for poor litter size, age, health problems or for nonconception. Replacement breeding stock is raised and added to the foundation breeding herd. It is assumed that one boar is used with the 10 sows and a new boar purchased each year. Gross receipts total \$5,307 or \$35.38 per feeder pig sold including the sale of cull breeding animals.

Direct costs are the costs associated with the producing of feeder pigs. The annual feed requirements by livestock class for the enterprise are shown in Table 4. Feed needs for the enterprise are 507 bushels of corn, 7,920 pounds of protein supplement and 1,600 pounds of a commercially prepared baby pig creep feed. Corn is priced at \$2.50 per bushel and protein supplement and creep feed at 10 cents per pound.

Feed requirements vary depending upon the amount of waste and the level of feeding used. Your experience may be different from the general requirements included in the budget. Other direct costs, such as marketing and hauling, veterinary and medicine, are shown in Table 2. Receipts over direct costs amount to \$2,332 for the enterprise, or \$15.55 per pig sold.

Overhead costs include those costs the farm in-

curs whether the enterprise is operated or not, and vary greatly from one operation to another. It has been assumed that 300 hours of labor are required at \$5.00 per hour. The building depreciation is based on a \$2,000 investment and a 15-year usable life, or a 6.7 percent depreciation rate per year. Equipment depreciation is based on an estimated \$1,500 investment and a 10-year usable life, or a 10 percent depreciation rate per year. Miscellaneous cost for insurance, property taxes on facilities and repairs are also included. Overhead costs total \$1,905, or \$12.70 per pig sold. The budget shows a net margin of \$427 for the enterprise, or \$2.85 per pig. This is return to management and debt-free capital invested in the facilities and breeding stock.

Use "your farm" column to estimate your cost and determine whether the enterprise provides adequate margin or return for the use of your management time and capital. Before investing any money, visit with other operations and obtain more information about the enterprise.

Additional Information

You can obtain additional information about producing feeder pigs from Extension Bulletin E-885, *Swine Production on Small Farms* and Extension Bulletin E-1093, *Pork Production Systems with Business Analysis for Producing Feeder Pigs (low investment)*. These bulletins are available from your county Cooperative Extension office.