

# On-Farm Care of the Show Pig



For bright 4-H youth who can master a multitude of skills, the 4-H swine project is an excellent project. It is for youth interested in learning about managing and caring for pigs while developing positive life skills.

## Dixie National Junior Roundup Swine Show

The Dixie National Junior Roundup Swine Show is the largest swine show in Mississippi and traditionally is held on Saturday near February 1 each year. Pigs shown at the Dixie National Junior Roundup Swine Show must qualify by showing at a district show and receiving a blue ribbon. The district shows are scheduled in late January a few days before the Dixie National Junior Roundup. The five district shows are Delta (Greenwood), Northeast (Verona), Northwest (Batesville), Southeast (Hattiesburg), and Southwest (Jackson). Some counties have a county swine show before the district show.

Many pigs shown at the Dixie National Junior Roundup are born in late-July and August, but pigs born other dates may also be good show prospects. Swine exhibitors usually purchase show pigs between the middle of September and the end of October.

When buying pigs for the show, base your selection on good structural soundness (correct feet and legs, able to walk freely), good length, depth and width of the body, and evidence of muscling without excess finish. A fresh, young-looking pig has a better chance of winning at the show than a rough, stale-looking pig. Purchasing healthy pigs that are the correct age and weight for the intended show makes feeding, training, and showing more enjoyable. For more information, refer to MSU Extension Service publication 2516, Guide to Determine What Weight Show Pig To Buy. You can download it from MSUCares.com or get a copy from your county Extension office.

At the Dixie National Junior Roundup, pigs are shown by breeds. Both barrows and gilts weighing 200 pounds or more are eligible to show. Each exhibitor may show only two pigs unless one is tagged Mississippi-bred; then three pigs can be exhibited. Classes at the roundup are Duroc, Hampshire, Yorkshire, Spots, Chester, Crosses, and other breeds. The Champion and Reserve Champion of each breed will be sold in the Sale of Junior Champions.



In 2006, a Mississippi-bred barrow show was added to the Dixie National Junior Roundup. Barrows entered in that show must be Mississippi-bred tagged pigs. These barrows show by weight (minimum 200 pounds and maximum 280 pounds). The Grand Champion of this show will be sold in the Sale of Junior Champions.

Pigs do not have to be tagged as Mississippi bred to compete in the market swine show at the Dixie National Junior Roundup but must be Mississippi-bred tagged pigs to compete for Mississippi-bred premiums and to enter the Mississippi-bred barrow show. The show in 2010 is a nonterminal show, which means you have to take all your pigs out of the show barn by the end of the show except the pigs to be sold in the Sale of Junior Champions.

## Mississippi Bred Contest

At the Dixie National Junior Roundup, pigs tagged with a Mississippi-bred tag can receive additional premiums. For each class, the top five placing Mississippi-



bred tagged pigs above tenth place will receive premiums provided by the Mississippi Pork Producers Association. Premiums are also paid for each breed champion and reserve as well as the Grand Champion and Grand Reserve. Following are the premiums: First place, \$50; second place, \$40; third place, \$30; fourth place, \$20; and fifth place, \$20; for each class. For each breed, here are the premiums: Breed Champ, \$100; Reserve Breed Champ, \$75; Grand Champion, \$500; and Reserve Grand Champion, \$300.

If you want to compete for the additional Mississippi-bred premiums, you must purchase a pig tagged as Mississippi bred and properly nominated as Mississippi bred. The producer is the only one who can nominate and tag the pig as Mississippi bred. Before you purchase the pig, ask the producer if the pig will be tagged Mississippi bred. Only pigs that are conceived, farrowed, and raised in Mississippi can be tagged as Mississippi bred pigs. All Mississippi-bred tagged pigs should be tagged before change of ownership, and the Mississippi-bred tag must be in the pig's ear when the pig shows. If a Mississippi-bred tag is lost, contact the person who sold you the pig and request a replacement tag before the show.

The Mississippi Pork Producers Association sponsors the Mississippi Bred contest and provides the Mississippi-bred premiums. You can get information about the Mississippi bred contest from the Mississippi Pork Producers Association, Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762 or call 662-325-1689.

## On-Farm Show Pig Management

To be successful showing pigs, an exhibitor should make plans before purchasing the show pig(s). It is a good idea to understand the show requirements. Become familiar with the rules and regulations of the specific show in which you will show the animal. Remember, each show may have different requirements, and the requirements may change from one year to the next.

Other things to consider before purchasing the show pig:

- Animal care - Who will care for the pig daily?
- Housing - Do you have a shelter and pen to keep the pig comfortable?
- Transport of the pig - Do you have a truck or trailer to haul the pig(s) you buy?
- Equipment - Do you have a self-feeder and water supply for the pig?
- Feed - What will you feed your pig, and will you have feed when the pig arrives?
- Health program - Ask the seller what vaccinations or wormers the pig has received and when the treatments were given.
- Market situation - What do you plan to do with your pig after the show?
- Sources of show pigs - Where will you go to purchase a show pig?

## Animal Care

When you decide to purchase a pig you need to be prepared to take good care of the animal. Care for the animal requires your time and attention everyday of the week. To be eligible to participate in the livestock shows, livestock exhibitors are required to have ethics certification. Completion of the ethics certification program covers some items related to animal care. A quality assurance program developed by the National Pork Board is another certification program specific for Youth showing pigs. This program is called "Youth PQA Plus" and is another good program to help train show pig exhibitors about issues related to animal care and health. Pigs sold after the show to markets may be required to have been certified as Youth PQA Plus and be transported to the market by a certified Transport



Quality Assurance (TQA) driver. Additional information regarding Youth PQA Plus and TQA certification can be obtained by contacting the Extension Swine Specialist in the Animal Dairy Sciences Department at Mississippi State University.

## Housing

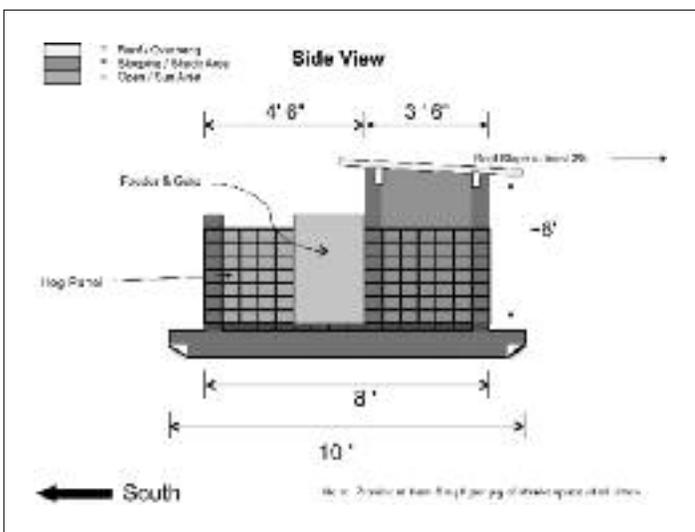
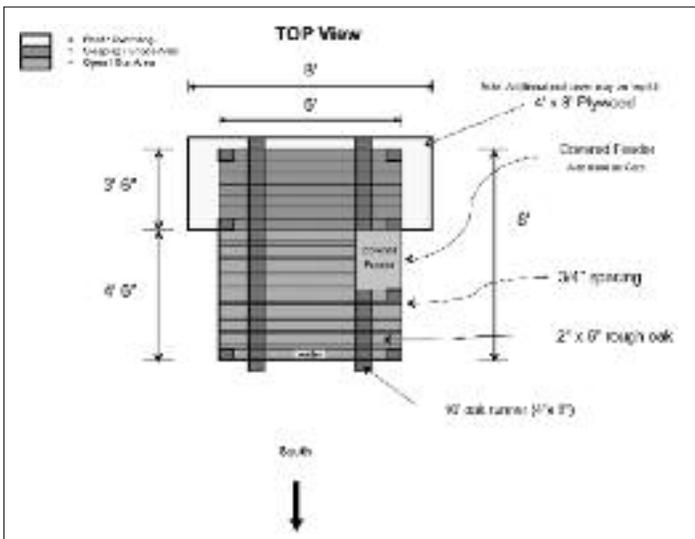
Generally, pigs need a shelter so they can stay comfortable. House them in clean, dry, warm, and well-ventilated areas with feed and water available to get the best performance from them. Pigs grow better if there is another pig in the pen or at least if they have fence line contact. They have fence line (fence or divider built so pigs can see each other). Keep in mind, show pigs bought for the Dixie National will experience both hot and cold temperatures as well as wet and dry weather, with a variety of humidity levels and wind conditions. The facility that houses the show pig must be able to accommodate changes in weather conditions.

Many types of facilities and shelters work for show pigs. You can change existing farm facilities or build a new one. A well-drained pasture or lot enclosed with net wire fencing and containing a shed for protection from inclement weather works well as housing for show pigs. Regardless of the facility you use to house the show pig, it is handy to have a fenced area available to exercise the pig and allow the exhibitor to work on showmanship skills.

**Space requirements** - The amount of space needed to house the pig(s) depends on how many pigs you plan to buy for the show. Based on recommendations listed in the Mid West Plan Service, *Swine Housing and Equipment Handbook*, and the National Pork Board *Swine Care Handbook*, pigs housed in an enclosed barn (kept in a pen inside a building), should have at least 8 square feet (ft<sup>2</sup>) of pen space per pig when several pigs are housed together. But for only one or two pigs, we recommend at least a 5' x 10' pen or similar size pen. For pigs housed in an outside pen with a shed for shelter, provide at least 6 ft<sup>2</sup> inside shade space at all times and 12 to 16 ft<sup>2</sup> of outside space for each pig. It is better to give show pigs extra pen space than to crowd them.

**Hot weather** - During hot weather, the pig requires plenty of shade for cooling and protection against sunburn. If the pig is confined in a building, ventilation (air flow) is very important. During periods of high temperatures, additional cooling may be desirable, such as water drippers. Water dripping on the pig helps cool the pig. The water drip nozzle and line should be high enough to keep the pig from reaching the drip nozzle. Provide enough pen space so the pig can move away from the dripping water. The pig self-regulates the amount of time spent under a dripper for cooling as long as there is enough space for the pig to avoid getting wet. You can buy automatic drippers that use a timer so water drips for a few minutes and shuts off to let the water evaporate. This improves the effectiveness of cooling with dripping water.

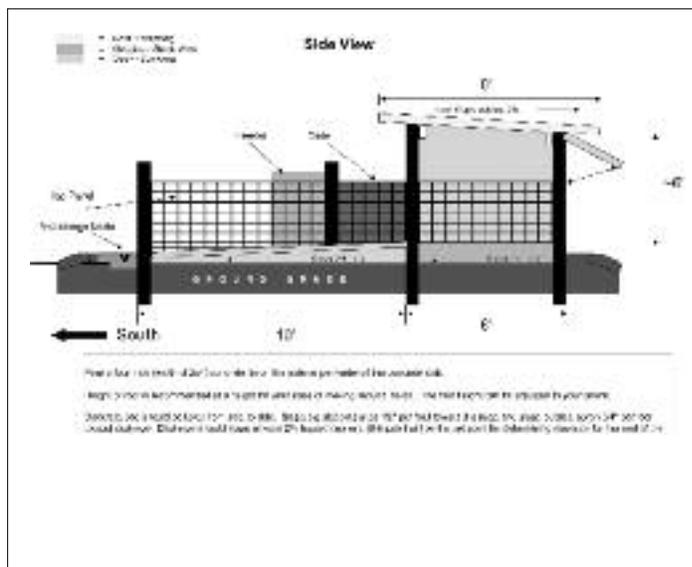
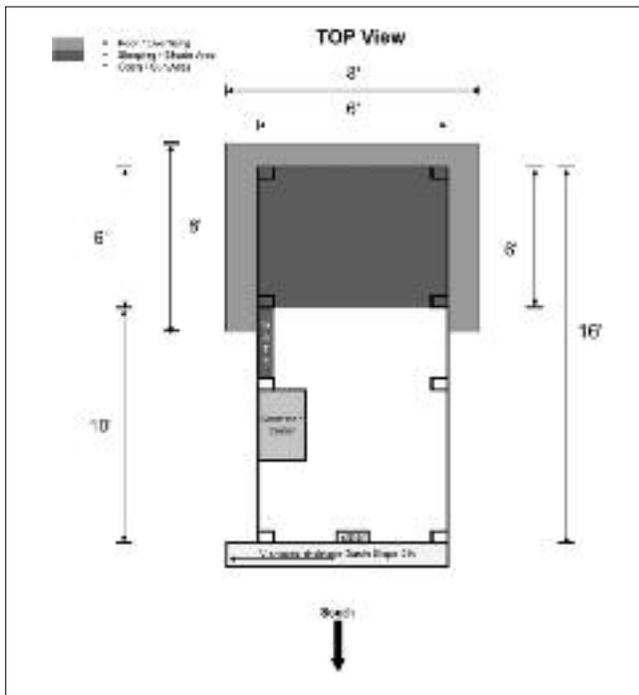
More airflow may be needed on extremely hot, humid, still days. A fan can be useful to create an air flow to cool the pig. Be sure the pig cannot reach the fan or the



electric cord. The fan should have a ground wire and be plugged into a grounded outlet. Also the fan should not be in a wet area or where water will contact the fan or electrical wiring. In extremely hot weather a combination of fans and water drip cooling may be necessary.

House show pigs on a solid floor (concrete) if possible. New concrete should be finished to a smooth finish, with a 1 to 2 percent slope toward the drainage area. The finish of concrete should be smooth but not finished with a machine trowel. Avoid using a broom finish because this may damage the pig's feet and make

the pen more difficult to clean. A finish that is too smooth cleans easily, but pigs slip often, especially when the floor is wet. Concrete flooring allows drip cooling and bedding to be used for the pig's comfort without making a mess.



**Cold weather** - For cold weather conditions pigs need to be housed in an area that does not allow drafts and is tight enough to retain heat. Ventilation is also important in cold weather, but you need to be able to control the amount of airflow on the pigs. Some type of bedding (wheat straw or wood shaving) provided on the pen floor may be needed to keep the pig warm and

also helps keep the pig clean (improving hair coat) before the show. Using supplemental heat may help in extreme cold conditions but typically should not be necessary if the pig is housed properly, since the pig should be near market weight by the time the weather turns cold.

### Temperature Guideline for Growing to Finish Pigs<sup>1</sup>

Stage of Growth	Weight, pounds	Comfort Range	Temperature, °F Lower Critical <sup>2</sup>	Upper Critical <sup>3</sup>
Early Growing	30 – 75	65 – 80	40	95
Growing	75 – 150	60 – 75	25	95
Finishing	150 to market	50 – 75	5	95

<sup>1</sup>Source Adapted, National Pork Board Swine Care Handbook

<sup>2</sup> When temperature approaches lower critical temperature, supplemental heat, bedding or other temperature modification is recommended.

<sup>3</sup> Except for brief periods above these air temperatures, some form of cooling should be provided when temperatures approach upper critical limits.

**Management of Waste** - Although you usually don't have to have permits for a small number of show pigs, good management of the pig facility is important. Keep the show pig's pen and facility clean at all times.

### Transport

**Transporting the purchased pig** - If you purchase a show pig, how do you plan to get it home? Hauling a show pig is normally not a problem if you have a truck to haul the pig. A crate or box in the back of a truck will work. Make sure the box is large enough to haul the pig(s) you purchase. Since you purchase show pigs for the Dixie National between September and mid-November, good ventilation and shade is important.

Place the pig in a vehicle with a covered top (protect the pig from sunburn or prevent the pig from getting wet, if raining) and ventilated (control the air flow on the pig) to keep the pig cool during transit. If you are hauling a pig during hot weather, use sand on the floor of the truck, box, or livestock trailer to help keep the pig from slipping during transit. Wetting the sand before loading helps keep the pig cool. Once the pig is loaded, don't make any unnecessary stops. This way, the pig won't get hot. If you transport a pig for a long time in hot weather, occasionally stop briefly to check the pig, provide drinking water for the pig, and if possible, dampen the sand.

When you get to the destination, promptly unload the pig into the shelter prepared for your show pig. Check the pig for any signs of distress. Make sure the pig gets familiar with the new facility and knows where water and feed are located. Some pigs may need to be introduced to the type of water source you are using. As an example, if the pig has been drinking water from a nipple waterer and you provide water in a shallow pan or trough, you may need to train the pig to drink from the pan. Find out what type of water system is used where you purchase the pig or ask the seller what type of water system is used.

**Transport of the pig to the show** - By the time of the show, requirements for transporting the pig are different. At show time, the pig is much larger and needs more space for transport. A livestock trailer works well for market weight pigs. If you have a livestock rack on a truck, loading and unloading the pig is more difficult. You need a ramp or chute to load or unload the pig. It would be a good idea to check with the show facility to make sure the show can unload pigs from the back of a truck.

Weather will probably be cool or cold in late January when transporting your pig to the county or district show or Dixie National. Some ventilation is necessary even in cold weather, but you should be able to control the airflow on the pig to avoid cold stress on the pig during transit. Use straw or wood shaving in the floor of the trailer or truck for bedding. The bedding keeps the pig clean and warm during transit to the show.

### Equipment

**Self Feeder** - Self feeding usually works best when pigs are young and growing. A self feeder you can adjust for feed flow helps feed the pig without wasting feed. When using a self feeder, don't place a large amount of feed in the feeder at one time. Place about a two-day supply of feed in the feeder at a time. Check the feeder each day to make sure the pig is eating the feed and the feeder is working properly. Make sure feed is fresh. Large amounts of feed put in a self feeder at one time can absorb moisture from the air, attracting rodents or birds, and may quickly lose freshness.



**Scale** - A scale is not necessary but can certainly help you know how to manage your pig for the show. If you can find a scale, weigh the pig a few days after arrival, when the pig has settled in and is on feed and water. Record the pig number, date, and weight of each pig you weigh. Wait two weeks from the first weigh date, and weigh your pig again.



Calculate the pig's average daily gain (ADG) to see if the pig is gaining as expected. To calculate ADG, subtract the first weight from the second weight and divide by the number of days. Example: If a pig weighed 60 pounds the first time and two weeks (14 days) later weighed 85 pounds, then  $85 - 60 = 25 \div 14 = 1.79$  lbs ADG for that weigh period. Average Daily Gain varies, depending on the genetic potential of the pig, health status, type and quality of the feed, how much feed is provided to the pig each

day, housing conditions, weather factors, and other factors. Normally, a pig should gain 1.40 to 2.00 pounds per day.

**Feed**

Before buying the show pig, you need to determine where you will buy feed for the pig. You need to have fresh feed available when the pig arrives. Many exhibitors purchase a show pig diet from a local feed

supplier or feed mill. If you do not have a source of feed, ask other swine exhibitors in your area where they buy show feed. Plan on feeding at least two pigs, since one pig by itself normally does not grow as well. Always have fresh, clean water available for the pig. An automatic water device ensures a water supply for the pig and reduces time spent hauling water. We do not recommend that you hand water the pig, except at the show.



**Approximate Daily Needs of Water and Feed by Pigs<sup>1</sup>**

Pig Size, pounds	Water, gallon <sup>2</sup>	Feed, pound <sup>3</sup>
50	1.07	3.25
100	1.85	5.60
150	2.34	7.10
200	2.74	8.30
250	3.17	9.60

<sup>1</sup>Source Adapted , National Pork Board Swine Care Handbook. Water Consumption based on .33 gallon per pound of feed intake.

<sup>2,3</sup> Water and feed intake depend on health status of the pig, housing conditions, air temperature, feed quality and quantity, water quality, and genetic potential of the pig.

Once you determine the source of your feed supply, find out what types of feed are available. Show pigs must have diets that supply the proper amount of nutrients to grow and reach maximum muscle and leanness.

A high-quality feed should be available to pigs at all times. As the pig grows, its nutrient needs change. You will probably purchase a different feed product later in the feeding period from what you start feeding the pig. Feed can become stale or lose quality if not stored correctly. Store feed in a cool, dry area in a container that prevents damage from rodents and insects. Feed can become stale or lose quality. In hot weather, don't store feed longer than 10 to 14 days if possible.

Adding an antibiotic in the feed is not always necessary but may improve the growth rate and health of the pigs. It is important to know if the feed you purchase contains an antibiotic. If it does contain an antibiotic, you should know what antibiotic, the amount or level, additional cost, and the purpose of the antibiotic.

If you purchase a complete feed, each bag will have a feed tag. On the feed tag, any antibiotic in the feed and its amount and withdrawal time will be listed. Remember, most antibiotics have specific withdrawal times (time between when the pig last ate the feed with the antibiotic and harvest) to avoid an antibiotic residue in the meat. Follow proper withdrawal schedules before showing pigs in a terminal show or before the pig goes to a market. Record the antibiotic, level in the feed, and withdrawal information on your exhibitor's health form. Use antibiotics only as directed on the label or feed tag.

You may hand feed pigs, where you limit how much feed you give the pig each day, or let the pig self feed, where you place feed in a pig feeder and the pig determines how much feed it wants. Show pigs should self feed until they weigh 200 pounds or more. As the pig grows, weigh it weekly and check the rate of gain. If the pig begins to gain faster than you want, then you

may have to hand feed to slow the pig's growth rate. Do not decrease the protein content of the feed, because this generally decreases muscle. Adjust the amount of feed given to each pig based on the growth rate of the pig to reach the desired final pig weight. Selecting a show pig that is the correct age and weight for the intended show normally prevents the need to hand feed the pig except to manage the amount of finish just before the show date.

### **Health Program**

Always remember to buy healthy pigs. When you buy your show pig, ask the producer about the pig. Has it been vaccinated or wormed? If so, what did the pig receive and when was the treatment given? Write the information down and keep it for your health records. Most show pigs need some type of vaccine, wormer, or treatment before the show. Contact your veterinarian for help with a health program for your show pig. Record the date and type of all vaccinations, worming, or health treatments. Also remember the feed you buy for your show pigs may contain an antibiotic. If so, record the type of feed antibiotic, and read the label for any required withdrawal time.

Transporting and mixing swine can stress pigs. To ease some potential problems associated with moving purchased show pigs, consider giving a recommended level of an approved antibiotic at the time of unloading. Also treat pigs for external and internal parasites at this time if they were not treated before purchase. Retreat pigs for external and internal parasites based on need and product used. Read all product labels and follow label recommendations.

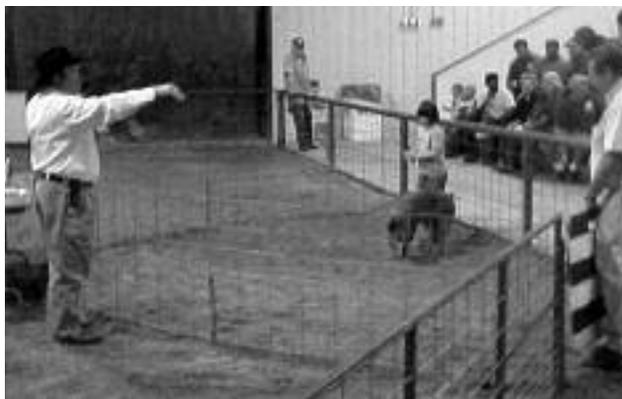
### **Market situation**

Before buying your pig it is a good idea to become familiar with the swine markets. Although the price you pay for the show pig(s) doesn't relate to the swine industry markets, the swine markets will impact your pig's value after the show. For the 2010 Dixie National Junior Roundup all market animals will be released after the show to the exhibitor. Each exhibitor will be responsible for his or her own market animal after the show. You must remove your the pig(s) from the show

barn by the end of the show, so you will need a vehicle to transport your pig(s) to a market or back home. Since we don't have many swine markets in Mississippi, plan ahead and determine what you will do with your pig after the show.

### **Sources of show pigs**

Several producers in Mississippi raise show pigs. Some sell show pigs individually off the farm, some have on-farm sales on a specific date, and others sell pigs through a show pig sale. Information on sale



dates and availability of show pigs is provided to county Extension offices each year as the information becomes available. Contact your county Extension office or swine producers who sell show pigs for information.

### **Summary**

Each swine exhibitor has a different amount of experience and resources to provide for his or her swine project. This publication gives you a place to start and reminds experienced exhibitors of basic animal care for pigs on the farm. The value of the swine project to youth depends upon the how much effort they put into the project. For youth who choose to invest their time and energy into the project, the true reward may not necessarily be a champion pig at the show but the satisfaction that they worked hard, learned many skills, and made many friends.

## References

Midwest Plan Service, 1983. Swine Housing and Equipment Handbook MWPS-8, Fourth Edition. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Page 3-4.

National Pork Board, 2003. Swine Care Handbook (<http://www.porkboard.org/>) National Pork Board, Des Moines, Iowa. Page 32-34.

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