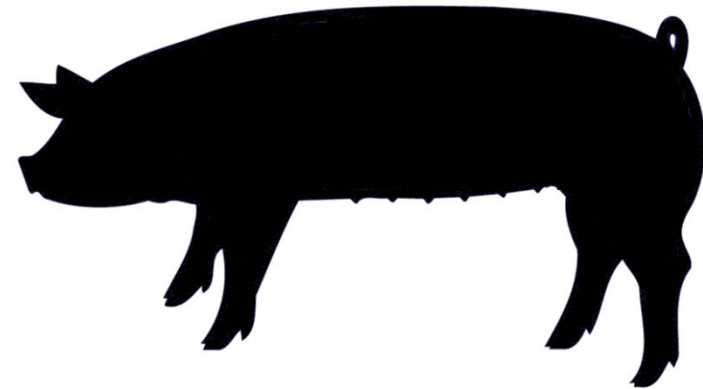




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The Market Hog Guide to Success



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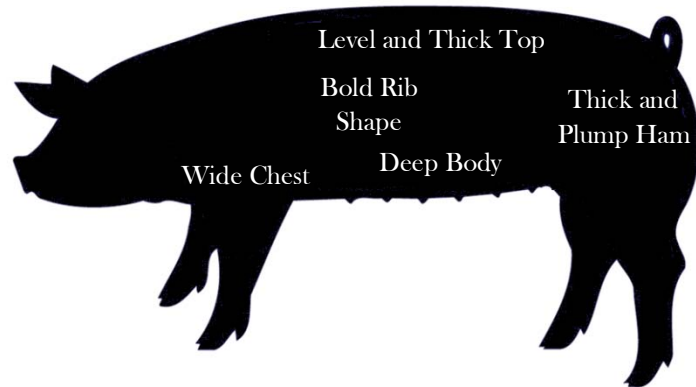
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Considerations for Selecting a Hog

The most important thing to consider when selecting a market hog is the date of your county fair. The average market hog will be finished between 6-7 months of age. A hog that is to be shown in the summer months will generally be born between January and February and purchased in the spring after weaning.

You want to purchase your hog from a reliable source and make sure you purchase a healthy hog. When considering confirmation it is important to think about structural correctness, muscle shape and definition, width of body and rib shape. A young hog should still have significant muscle definition, be able to move easily and have bold rib shape.

The gender and breed of your hog is an important consideration as well. Once pigs reach about 100 lbs research shows that barrows will grow faster and eat more feed than gilts, but gilts are more efficient and produce a leaner carcass which requires more protein. Each hog breed is slightly different in terms of confirmation. Finding a breed that you are satisfied with is important. The most popular breed of market hog is a "Blue-butt" which is a cross between a Yorkshire and a Hampshire. Below is a figure identifying some important points to look for when selecting a market hog.



Clipping

Before clipping any hair on your pig find out what the show requirements are. Some shows may allow you to body clip your hog and some may not. Some shows will not tolerate any clipping of the market hog, while others allow you to shave the ears inside and out and the tail of the hog. No matter your personal preference be sure to follow the guidelines put in place by the show that you are attending.

Show Day Preparation

Start your show day preparation by washing your market hog and letting them dry completely. You may want to brush you hog's hair to create a clean look. Be sure to clean your hog's ears and have fun!

Showmanship Tips

- Use a light whip, cane or stick to direct the hog about the arena. The hog should respond to light taps or the mere sight of a show stick.
- Show your hog at a slow to moderate walk constantly keeping him on the move.
- Permit your hog to stand for brief moments if he remains alert. Avoid allowing your hog to root in the ground.
- Keep your hog within a clear view of the judge.
- Carry your brush in your pocket out of sight and only use it when needed.
- Keep your distance from the judge so that he can easily see your market hog.

Preparing a Market Hog for Show

Preparing at Home

It is important to work with your animal at home to train them for the show day. You will want to take time each day to practice driving your market hog and brushing your hog's hair. Using your show cane, pig stick or hands practice walking your hog to specific locations both in and outside of the pen. Brush your hog's hair in a back and down motion creating a part down your hog's spine every day. Working with your hog daily allows the two of you to bond. The more time you spend practicing at home the better chance that your hog will cooperate on show day.

As the show approaches, you will want to take some extra time to make sure that your hog has healthy, clean skin. One week prior to the show wash your hog. This will get them use to the experience and you will have a cleaner hog when you get to your show.

Exercise

Exercising your market hog not only helps tone and strengthen your hog's muscles, but it also allows you to identify your market hogs strengths and weaknesses. You should start an exercise program one month before your show. Your market hog should get a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise per day. The exercise may include walking your hog or playing with your hog. Be sure to exercise your market hog in a safe area free of harmful sharp edges and wires that might bruise or cause damage to your hog.

Meat Quality Assurance

A quality assurance program is a program designed to help livestock producers raise their animals in a way that will provide a safe and wholesome product for the consumer.

As a 4-H livestock producer it is your responsibility to produce a safe food product while caring for your animals in an ethical manner. Proper handling and management of your livestock project is essential to the quality of the final product. Be consistent in your feeding regiment and handle animals in a quiet, gentle manner. Keep accurate and complete records and maintain a healthy animal. When treatment or injections are necessary for animal health read the label, administer properly, adhere to withdrawal times, give injects in the neck and keep accurate records. Be sure to consult your veterinarian for vaccination and treatment options.

A high-quality, safe, wholesome food product is the goal of every livestock producer. Make sure you are doing your part by raising your 4-H market project in a safe and ethical manner. Below are some examples of humane and inhumane practices.

Humane Practices

- Feed a balanced ration
- Provide plenty of clean water
- Follow a planned health and vaccination program
- Keep animal in a warm dry place that is adequately ventilated and well bedded
- Start training animals at a young age

Inhumane Practices

- Lack of animal grooming
- Failure to feed and water animals regularly
- Failure to keep pen and stalls clean and dry
- Kicking, kneeling, beating, jerking, or slapping an animal in ring
- Improper medicating of animals

How to Feed a Market Hog

Proper feeding of your market hog is essential for a successful project. Pigs should be fed using a self feeder. A self feeder will allow your market hog to eat as much as it needs and grow as quickly as possible. You will need to pay attention to your show weight requirements to ensure that your hog is eating the correct amount to meet the requirements. In some cases this may require that you limit your hogs intake by taking them off of a self feeder and feeding them a limited amount of feed multiple times per day.

Feed

There are two types of feed that you will most likely need to feed your market hog from the time of purchase until you sell it. The first is a grower ration and the second is a finishing ration. Growing rations have more protein, calcium, and phosphorous than finishing rations to allow the young hog to develop bone and muscle. Below is a chart indicating the weight range for feeding a growing ration and a finishing ration, how much you will likely need to feed and what you can expect the average daily gain to be on each ration.

	Weight of Hog (lbs)	Daily Feed Intake (lbs)	Average Daily Gain (lbs)
Growing Hogs	44-110	4-5	1.5
Finishing Hogs	110-240	5-6	1.8
	240-280	7-8	1.7

Transitioning from one ration to another

When you are ready to move your market hog from a growing ration to a finishing ration it is important to transition slowly so as not to cause digestive upset in your market hog. Start by feeding ½ grower

ration and ½ finishing ration. Every few days add more finishing ration and less growing ration until you have reached a diet consisting of all finishing ration. This transition should take approximately 7 to 10 days.

Determining How Much Your Hog Needs to Eat

Take the time to evaluate how much your hog will need to gain from the time of purchase until your show date to be sure your hog is gaining enough weight to meet the show requirements. As an example you purchase a 50 lb hog in March, your hog must weigh a minimum of 220 lbs for the show and you have 145 days until your show. Your hog needs to gain a minimum of 170 lbs or about 1.2 lb per day.

$$220 \text{ lbs} - 50 \text{ lbs} = 170 \text{ lbs} \qquad 170 \text{ lbs} / 145 \text{ Days} = 1.2 \text{ lbs/day}$$

Hogs typically need to eat 4 to 5 lbs of feed for every 1 lb of gain. Your hog will need to eat a minimum of between 5 and 6 lbs of feed to ensure a gain of 1.2 lb per day.

The average daily gain for a market hog is between 1.5 and 1.8 lb per day. The above example indicates a need for a gain of 1.2 lb per day. Reaching the minimum weight requirement is achievable given the average daily gain of market hogs. Be sure to weigh the amount of feed you are feeding at least once a week to help estimate how much your market hog is gaining.

Water and Minerals

Always provide plenty of clean water. If using a nipple for watering, be sure to check it for clogs daily. Fresh water is essential for a healthy livestock project.