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Volume 15 Issue 2

Swine Time!

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Raise your hand if you've already started thinking about the 2016 show season! I have and even though it's not even August, we should have it on our minds!

There is plenty to do to get ready for new pig projects, and what a better time to start than when school hasn't begun. It is best if the pens are cleaned and set up like you want them to be and any repairs that are needed, have been taken care of. This way, all you will need when it comes time to buy pigs, is feed, water, and bedding! The worst thing that can happen is to not be ready when your new project arrives.

I have early memories of hauling small square bales of wheat straw out of the field to my barn every year about this time. Once that was finished, it was time to get my pens together. It was always refreshing to me, as I received new pigs, that the work was finished and I could dedicate my time to learning about my new project, and begin to work on taming him down.

If you need help designing or re-configuring your pens, give me a call. Some of you may keep animals at the ag farms in Tulia and Happy, so your pens are pretty much ready to go, to an extent. If you plan on making modifications, please call either Mr. Bow or I so that we will know what is going on.

In the last newsletter, I talked about the existence of show teams, and much to my surprise it was 50/50 on those who either agreed or disagreed with my opinion. That's

fair enough. I also shared information on weight breaks and validation updates.

In this month's newsletter, we'll talk about tips on selecting your pig project, buying assistance, project meeting plans, and information on the county and major shows.

I invite you to read through this issue and use the information to make decisions on your swine projects this year. Many factors will affect how well you do, and it all starts today.

Pork Facts

"No man should be allowed to be President who doesn't understand hogs."

-President Harry Truman

- A pig can run a seven minute mile.
- Hogs have between 34-44 teeth.
- Over 40 pharmaceutical products come from hogs.
- Pigs are found on every continent except Antarctica.
- Pork tenderloin cuts are almost as lean as skinless chicken breasts.
- A pig's squeal can reach 110-115 decibels; the same as the sound of a jet.
- From breeding, it takes 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days for piglets to be born.

For more information regarding 4-H livestock programs, please contact:

John Villalba, CEA
Cell: (806) 786-0144
John.villalba@ag.tamu.edu

Selecting Your Show Pig

Selecting the right pig for yourself is very important, and it isn't only about learning how to evaluate your future pig project based on its physical appearance. Project buying season can be as hard or easy as you make it. With proper planning, trips to sales and farms can be fun!

The first thing I ask 4-H families when I'm about to go buy a swine project for them is, what shows do you plan on attending and what kind of budget do you have? You must have an idea of where you want to show, so you can buy the proper age animal. Also, don't necessarily max out your project budget on the purchase since you have to account for feed, medicine, and bedding costs. After you have a plan with these factors in mind, it's time to start learning the physical aspect. You also need to know, based on certain judges, certain shows, personal preference, facilities, and feeding program what breed you want to show. On page 3 of this newsletter, you will find descriptions of the breeds that are shown in Texas. For example, if I know that an exhibitor doesn't have good access to a pen that can be well shaded, I usually will not buy a white pig (Yorkshire or Chester White). You also need to keep in mind that if you plan to go to the San Angelo Stock Show, you **MUST** purchase a Texas bred pig.

So, with that in mind, let's move into the physical and genetic portion of evaluating swine projects. Learning about the breeding behind these pigs can help immensely, so you can kind of have an idea of how the pigs will feed out and mature. This takes a few years of studying and talking to show pig enthusiasts before you can get a handle on this. As far as the good physical characteristics, we'll talk the basics. It may also help to learn the parts of the pigs so you can have an idea of where to look. I've included a diagram on page 5 for you to use.

The toughest part of buying pigs is determining potential. We can guess based on how they look and knowing their background, but in the end, they are still animals, and can change at any time. When I go to farms and sales, the very first place I look is at their feet and legs. I'm critical of pigs that, at 6 weeks of age, have issues with their structure, because that could turn into a major disaster once they put on 200 pound or more. I need the rear legs to be showy, but not too straight to where they are up on their toes. I also like for the toe size and set to pasterns be comfortable appearing. I stay away from pigs that are too bowed out as you view them from the front and that are too relaxed on their pasterns. You also need to understand that most pigs are born and weaned onto a nursery deck, so if you see them early and put them down on the ground, they may walk funny. If they have been on the ground for awhile and still walk awkwardly, then they may have a structural issue.

Swollen or enlarged hocks are difficult to see through at an early age, especially if you are looking for plenty of substance of bone (big boned). But, I err on the side of caution in this instance and stay away from some of those too. I also will search for those pigs which have the most level hip as you view it from the hooks to pins (from 4" in front of the tail to a location even with the tail).

From the feet and legs, I evaluate the "potential" they have in terms of muscle development and show look. I look for muscle from the rear, in the ham region, and between the shoulders. I want bloom or thickness of muscle at an early age. I also want pigs that have a wide chest, deep body, clean, pretty front (jowl), and a neat, wide skull. I think that all these things combined are very basic and couple them with what you learn about the pig's genetics could put you on the right track.

I tend to believe that those characteristics can start you with a good pig project. How you do with that pig come show time, is completely up to you. Once your project is home in say October, and what you do each day, will determine your success in the spring. In the next newsletter, we'll talk about facilities and care.

Project Buying Assistance

There are a few things I want to mention regarding getting help with purchasing swine projects. As stated previously, I usually buy projects when asked, **but in order to do this you must let me know by August 21, 2015 and will have to put purchase money into the SCALLSF account before I go buy the pigs.** This ensures that I don't have to use personal checks. You are also welcome to come with me, if your schedule allows (you can learn a lot from coming along). We also have several swine project leaders who can assist you with buying as well. If you are wanting to do this, please call me and I will put you in contact with one of those volunteers. Lastly, if you know of a kid who would like to show for the first time, but doesn't have the funds, we have the Salvation Army Buddy Program to help these individuals. If you know of anyone, please let me know. For others needing money, the FSA office also offers Youth Livestock Loans. Also, one thing I want to remind you of, is that **BEFORE** you call someone to help, you need to have your plan together (breed, price, targeted shows, facilities, personal preference) so that we know what to bring home for you.

Project Meeting Schedule

For the second year in a row, I will be offering swine project meetings once a month this fall. We call this the Back to Basics Swine Program. If you attend all 4 meetings, you will get a certificate and a reward to use at shows. All meetings will be held in the Annex meeting room at the Extension Office, unless otherwise noted, and will include guest speakers. The schedule is as follows, and is subject to change:

Tuesday, September 15th 6:00 p.m. - Facilities and Daily Care

Tuesday, October 6th 6:00 p.m. - Nutrition and Health

Tuesday, November 10th 6:00 p.m. - Grooming/Show Prep

Saturday, December 12th 9:00 a.m.— Showbarns Showmanship

These meetings can be very beneficial and **it is encouraged for one parent or family member to come along with you.**

Validation Tag Orders

Pig validation will be taking place later this fall, but we must order the tags soon. **The deadline to order tags will be Friday, September 18th, 2015.** Each state validation tag will cost \$13.00, and the county only validation tags will cost \$4.00. **Here is what you must remember: If you buy a county only tag, you cannot enter for major stock shows. So, if you're unsure, PLEASE spend the extra \$9.00 and buy a state validation tag. It never fails that usually in December, someone calls and wants to go to a major show and I cannot authorize that, since you only tagged for county.** When you order your tags, please bring the money to the office when you order, or you will have to pay on the day of validation. We also ask that if you're unsure in September of how many pigs you'll have, to go ahead and order an extra tag.

Pig Breeds

Berkshire - Black & white with erect ears exhibiting Berkshire breed character, must have white on face and tail unless tail is docked, three of the four legs must be white, no solid white or solid black face from ears forward, no solid black nose, white allowed on ears but neither ear can be entirely white, one occasional splash of white may be on body

Chester White - Chester White breed characteristics, down medium sized ears, solid white, no color on skin larger than silver dollar, no colored hair

Duroc - red in color and possesses Duroc breed character, down medium sized ears, no white hair, no black hair, maximum of 3 black spots on the skin and none can be larger than 2" diameter, no shading or indication of belt

Hampshire - Black with white belt starting on front leg, belt may partially or totally encircle body, Hampshire breed character, erect ears not rounded, no white hair or streaking on forehead, no red hair

Landrace - Landrace breed character, down large sized ears, solid white, no colored hair, no color on skin larger than silver dollar

Poland China - Poland China breed character, black with white face and switch unless tail is docked, three of four legs must be white, may have occasional splash of white on body, maximum of one black leg, ears down, no evidence of belt formation, no red or sandy hair or pigment

Spotted - Black and white in color, Spotted breed character, ears cannot be erect, no red tinted or sandy brown spots, no solid black head from ears forward, no distinct white belt (hair or skin) encircling and extending down on each shoulder

Yorkshire - White in color and possesses Yorkshire breed character, ears must be erect, no hair color other than white, no colored skin larger than silver dollar, no masking above eyes larger than silver dollar

Dark Crossbred - Black and/or red pigmentation, not sandy, rusty, orange, roan, gray, or blue making up 20% of total body area, can be black or red belted, black/red patched, or spotted

Light Crossbred - Any coloration pattern or pigmentation

2016 Show Schedules and Information

Swisher County Stock Show - Barrow Show

Monday, January 18th, 2016

Judge: Austin Voyles, CEA-Potter County

Ft. Worth Stock Show - Barrow Show

Arrival: 3 p.m. Mon. Feb. 1– 9 a.m. Wed. Feb. 3

Show: Thurs. Feb. 4 & Fri. Feb. 5

Judge: Kane Causemaker, Atkinson, IL

San Angelo Stock Show - Barrow Show

Feb. 16-18, 2016

Entry Limit: 2 head

Entry Fee: \$27.00/hd

Judge: TBD after validation

San Antonio Stock Show - Barrow Show

Group 1: Feb. 20-22 (Berk, Spot, Hamp, Duroc, Poland, Dark Cross)

Group 2: Feb. 23-25 (Chester, York, Landrace, Cross)

Judges: Andy Rash (Berk, Chester, Duroc, Hamp, York)

Dr. Clint Schwab (Cross, Dark Cross, Landrace, Poland, Spot)

Houston Stock Show - Barrow Show

March 12-17

Wave 1: March 13 - Duroc, Hamp, Poland

March 14 - Berk, Spot, Dark Cross

Wave 2: March 16 - York, Chester/OPB, Light Weight Other Cross

March 17 - Other Cross

Judges: Mike McCoy, OH

Brian Arnold, IN

Star of Texas Stock Show (Austin) - Barrow Show

March 18-20

March 19 - Duroc, OPB Dark, OPB White, Hamp

March 20 - York, Cross

Judge: Miles Toenyas, IL

Texas 4-H Membership

I should've mentioned this at the beginning of the newsletter, but you need to remember that September 1, 2015 is the beginning of the new 4-H year. So, in order to show in 4-H please re-enroll on 4-H Connect, beginning August 15th. For new families, they will need to get into 4-H Connect and create a profile in order to enroll. The fee is \$20 until October 1, then it moves to \$25. Youth may participate in the 4-H year from September 1st of Grade 3 through August 31 following completion of Grade 12, with these age restrictions:

- Minimum age: 8 (in addition to being in Grade 3)
- Maximum age: 18 (as of August 31, 2015)

4-H Member Categories

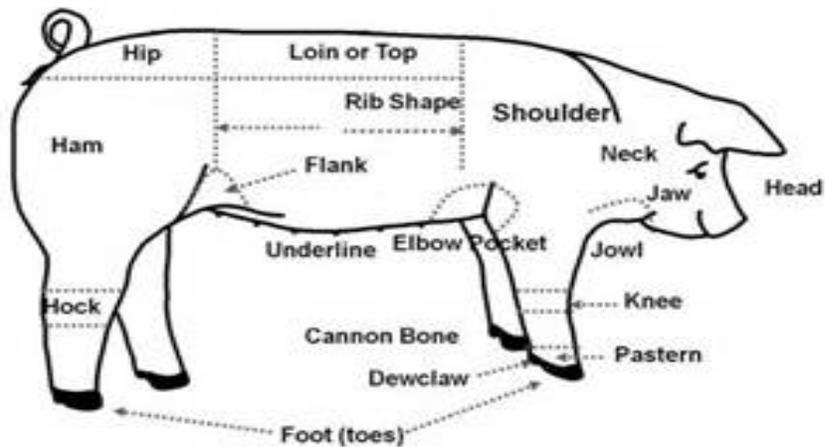
- Juniors: Grades 3-5
- Intermediates: Grades 6-8
- Seniors: Grades 9-12



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

SWISHER COUNTY

310 W. Broadway
Tulia, TX 79088



The Swine Project Newsletter

Is published by

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Swisher
County**

Swisher County Extension Office

310 W. Broadway

Tulia, Texas 79088

806-995-3721 Fax: 806-995-2364

swisher.agrilife.org

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