



Some basic information for raising hogs profitably

Boars – the engine of your farm

A successful operation will always begin by careful selection of boars. Genetically, your boars determine the survivability of your herd. Imagine the consequences if your boar is sterile; all your females would end up having no piglets, and absence of piglets means no business.

Selecting your boars – eight (8) important things to consider

Always **(1)** select young males which are in good health, and be sure to find out that it comes **(2)** from a big litter. Young males from small litters will grow faster because of more available milk from their mothers, but they will transfer this undesirable genetic trait (small litter size) to your herd if you make selections this way.

Make sure that **(3)** the number of teats on the young boar is high; a good even number of 8 on either side of the belly is desirable. This is important as the boar transfer this trait to his daughters. A high number of teats on a female usually determine that she will be able to carry and nurse a higher number of piglets. A female with 16 teats will thus be able to suckle 16 piglets.

More than one boar can be kept on the farm at any one time. Make sure to **(4)** keep good records of which boar mates with which sows or gilts, largely to **(5)** avoid mating fathers with daughters, which can result in genetic or hereditary problems on the farm.

Ensure that your **(6)** boars are kept away from other males to prevent fighting, and **(7)** keep its pen clean and free from objects that will inflict cuts or injuries. Also be sure to **(8)** prevent leg problems, particularly hind leg problems which will impact on the boar's ability to mount and mate with females.

Selecting sows and gilts

Usually, your original females will arrive on your farm from another place. **(1)** Ensure that your females are from large litters, **(2)** ask what kinds of illnesses the mothers had (hopefully the seller will provide this information), and particularly, **(3)** ask whether the mother had problems with agalactia (no milk), metritis (inflammation of the womb), or mastitis (no milk let down) after she littered.

Determine that your **(4)** females also have a high number of even teats, as this is a basic determination of piglet survivability. In season two of your operation, select young females to be used as sows from your current population. Once again select on the basis of high litter size, high and even teat numbers, the mother's prolificacy (high number of live births and survival rate), her docile behavior and absence of major disease problems.

Gestation and littering

A pregnant sow takes 3 months and three weeks to litter. Learn to notice the signs of littering so you can put the sow in a littering pen soon enough. If adequate space is provided, the chance of the mother crushing young piglets will be diminished. Clean the umbilical cords with dilute iodine solution on the morning after littering and clip canine teeth if this is desired. On day three after their birth, administer iron shots, multi-vitamins and vaccines as necessary.

Weaning of piglets; the 3-step process

Piglets usually require no additional food for the first three to four weeks of their lives and will get all their nutrients from mothers' milk. It is important that the Sow is monitored during this period to make sure she has plenty of fresh clean water and enough food to provide for her piglets.

Usually at about two to three months the piglets are weaned away from their mother. The best approach is a gradual one using a combination of techniques which **(1)** begins with 'creep feeding' where the piglets are allowed to begin feeding on their own in an area where the mother cannot get at their feed. Feed is provided along with the ability to get to their mother for milk when they need to.

After a few days of creep feeding, **(2)** piglets are shut off from the Sow for an entire day, then let back on to suckle briefly. **(3)** Over the process of a week they are shut off for longer periods until they are no longer allowed to get access to her at all.

Fattening piglets to a hundred pounds

A key concept in raising piglets to fattening size is called the feed conversion ratio. This is simply the amount of weight that the animal gains from every pound of feed provided to that animal. For

example, if a pig is given 2 pounds of feed and gains 1 pound in weight as a result, it is said to express a feed conversion ratio of 2 to 1, usually expressed as 2:1.

Feeds containing high digestible proteins (soymeal, for example) usually result in a higher weight gain for every pound of feed provided. Of course, the lower the amount of feed and the higher the weight gain, the less the farmer will have to spend on buying feed, and the more profit he will eventually make. Every pig farmer should determine what his best feed conversion ratio should be, and thus must take into consideration the types of feed, whether commercial, pasture grasses or restaurant wastes that he has access to, and in what ratios he wants to feed them to his herd.

The objective therefore, in getting a fatter to 100 pounds, is to provide the quality of food that will get it to that desired weight with as low a ratio as is economically possible, and in the quickest time possible.

Setting up a series of 10-Sow pigsties

A 10-Sow pigsty is a pen that is usually divided into 8 sections, with one section or sub-division being triple the size of the others. A floor plan would therefore depict five pens on one side, a walkway down the middle large enough to accommodate a wheelbarrow, and another set of three pens on the opposite side with one of these three being the triple sized, and able to accommodate weaners (to be fattened) from all the mothers. The other pens would house 2 sows each, the boar, and a farrowing pen.

	2 Sows in each of these pens			
Fattening Pen			Farrowing Pen	Boar Pen

Connecting a series of 10 sow pens, economically

Using the strategies discussed above in choosing sows and boars and in feeding animals economically, a 10-Sow piggery should be able to produce an average of 100 piglets each breeding cycle. This is achieved if each mother gives birth to and rear 10 piglets to weaning. It is important to understand that

the number 10 represents the lowest number of piglets a Sow should take to weaning in any reasonable enterprise. In a given year, with proper management, a 10 sow piggery will yield 200 to 300 piglets with mothers giving birth 2 or 3 times (taking weaning time and duration of pregnancy into consideration).

A series of 10-Sow piggeries (say 10 series) on a farm should therefore be feasibly capable of producing 2000 to 3000 (or an average of 2,500) piglets each year. If we use the average number stated here (2,500), a farm with 10 separate piggeries each containing 10 sows should yield a weight of 250,000 pounds of pork if weaners are taken to 100 pounds each.

A price of \$2.00/lb will gross the farmer \$500,000 per annum. The farmer will have to subtract the following input costs from this total to arrive at a profit value;

- feed costs
- water costs
- transportation costs
- energy costs (electricity)
- medication costs
- processing costs
- management and labor costs
- Miscellaneous costs (repairs, vet visits, weather related problems)

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