Planting the Seeds for a Successful Swine Project

2020

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Agenda

• Swine Project – Why?
• Stages of Project
• Project Expectations
• Fair Expectations
• What I wish I had known!
• Clinics and Workshops
Why do a swine project?

• They’re cute!
• They’re easy!
• They’re fun!
• Learn about swine industry – Livestock is a $1B industry in Montana
• Learn the process of hog production – from birth to the freezer
• Learn to care for an animal
• Learn discipline
Stages of Swine Project

• Preparation
• Selection
• Care and Feeding
• Training
• Fair
  • Showing
  • Sale
• Carcass Evaluation
  • Swine of Excellence
Preparation

• Pens
  - Rule of thumb - 10’ x 10’ (100 sq ft) per pig
• Shelter
  - Shade available majority of the day
  - Consider how long sun is out during summer – light pigs will get sunburn
  - Pigs will always choose cool and dry over wet and muddy

• Water
  - Best to use some sort of tube or covered water with nipple
    - Water stays clean – can’t be tipped over
    - Pigs are ready to use nipple waterer at fair
• Feeding – Trough, Self Feeder, Covered
  - Minimize waste
• Transportation access
  - Tagging
  - Fair
Selection

• Finding a breeder
  • Ask others in your club – Ask Superintendents

• Cost
  • Remember desired outcome

• Weight
  • Fair weight – minimum 210 lbs – over 300 lbs is “heavyweight’
    • Under weight pigs are ‘Feeder class’
  • Some breeds grow faster than others

• Born AFTER January 1st - Must have possession by April 15th

• Most pigs will gain 1 to 1 ½ lbs per day
  • Proper nutritional feed

• Consider buddy pig –
  • Can tag multiple pigs for fair and choose at weigh-in
Care and Feeding

• Cleanliness
  • Pigs like to be clean
    • They pick specific place to pee and poop
  • Use mud to stay cool – Don’t like it

• Keep healthy
  • Worm early – before fair
    • Make sure to worm early enough to be ready for fair sale
  • Identify a vet BEFORE you have issues
    • Look for signs of sickness

• Feed
  • Consider best for your breed – protein is very important for young pigs
  • 3 to 4 lbs of feed for each pound gained – minimize waste - $$!
Training
• Start Early!
  • Get pigs used to human interaction
    • Sit with pigs – be gentle
    • Pet them – get them used to touching ears
    • Don’t hurry the process
• Walk them
  • Pigs normally stay close to food – many walk their pigs outside enclosures
  • Consider using large fenced area
  • Get them used to touch behind ears with ‘whip’
• Practice getting them into trailer
  • Make it a game with food
Fair! – 5 P’s

• Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

• Crazy busy!
  • Starts at home – Start a checklist of what you need at fairgrounds
    • Keep schedule handy – Use the ‘SCHED’ App for your phone
  • Pigs can get nervous and cranky – more training = better results
    • Be patient – ask for help

• Pay attention to pig as you grow with them
  • Do they mind better fed or will they work better in order to get food?
  • Remember this as you go through fair week

• Represent 4-H and your Club with Pride!
  • Many opportunities to talk to fair attendees, small groups – Show Off!
The Show Ring

• Be ready by practicing before fair
  • You AND your pig need to practice
  • Go to clinics – watch youtube videos

• Get the jitters out before entering
  • Maybe walk your pig before show
  • Try to keep them calm

• Don’t freak out!
  • Be patient – Ring masters will help
  • Focus on your pig – not others

• Smile!!
The Sale

• Consider marketing your animal to local business/friends/family, etc
• Buyers are buying you AND the pig – show confidence while selling
• Get the jitters out early
• Pig sale split in half – Over 100 hogs to sell
  • Half start after Poultry and Rabbit
  • Half after steers/goats/sheep
• Order determined by numbers drawn during weigh-in
  • Grand and Reserve Champions go first – Junior and Senior Divisions
Carcass Evaluation

• Perhaps the most important step of project
  • Project focus should be to raise great tasting, healthy pork
• Certified Inspector evaluates each carcass for quality
• Get to see the full circle of swine industry
• Planned tour of meat processing facility prior to Evaluation Day
• Swine of Excellence
  • Montana Pork Producers recognizes top graded hogs
When does Project start?

• Now!

• Important Dates
  • Market Project pigs going to 2019 fair must be born after January 1\textsuperscript{st} 2019
  • Tagging – April 19\textsuperscript{th} – 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
  • Register for fair – June 15\textsuperscript{th}
  • Weigh in – July 22\textsuperscript{nd}
Project Expectations

Parents and Leaders:
• Enjoy and Learn!
• Humanely care for your pig
• Work with your pig regularly
• Teach Others

4-H Members:
• Win?
  • Showmanship
  • Market
• Learn?
  • Pig Production
  • Breeding
• Earn Money?
  • Cost vs Selling Price
Fair Expectations

• Commitment
• Work as a Team
• Share Experiences
• Represent your Club and 4-H with Pride and Professionalism
• Fair Ain’t over until the barns are empty!
Fair Expectations

• Feeding
  • Cleanliness – How Often
  • Respect other participants

• Water
  • Watering Tube – Easy to build and keeps things clean

• Sale
  • Be ready!
  • Pictures with Pig

• Clean Up – Everyone helps!

• Carcass Evaluation – Normally three/four days after fair
  • Perhaps the most important part of project
  • Swine of Excellence Award
Record Books

• Very Important to Document your Project!
  • Keep good records – Helps answer questions from judges and others
  • Keep track of expenditures
    • How much did you really earn?

• Historical Importance
  • If you do swine more than one year, great way to compare progress

• Great reference if using 4-H Experience for further Education

• THAT’S WHEN IT ENDS!!
What I wish I’d known!

• One thing that everyone should know about starting a swine project is that you should treat it like a business. Purchase a pig that is appropriate for your budget. Remember you still have to purchase feed, straw, whips, etc.

• I learned that its very important to build trust between you and your animal. One major key to doing this is start working with your pigs about 1-2 weeks after you bring them home. The more you work with them each day the better the outcome in the ring!

• The most challenging thing about raising a pig is loading them into a trailer for the first time. To make this easier, start when they are little and make it a fun experience for you and your pig by putting food/treats in the trailer.

• Whenever I had a question or a concern about my pig I contacted our local vet (Dr. Stav - Bridger Vet). Another good person to ask questions is your breeder.

Payton Sprague
Clinics and Workshops

• Quality Assurance – Required every 3 Years
• Tizer Meat Tour – TBD
• Showmanship Clinic – TBD
• Nationally Recognized Lamb/Swine Camp – June 5-6
  • In conjunction with Jackpot
• Other ideas?