

Enterprise Guide for Southern Maryland: Raising Market Hogs

This fact sheet is one in the series Enterprise Guide for Southern Maryland, providing information about alternative agricultural enterprises for farmers.

If you are thinking about starting an alternative enterprise, consider raising market hogs. The following pork production system works well for farmers who are new to swine production. The enterprise involves buying young pigs that weigh about 40 to 50 pounds each and feeding them until they reach market weight (225 to 230 pounds).

Marketing hogs as an alternative enterprise is not for everyone. It takes time, money, a talent for buying and selling, and a willingness to keep on top of the markets. To become a market hog producer, you need to be able to withstand some financial loss when sales are slow, so that your operation is in full production during the "best" financial periods. Also, if you are short of labor and the husbandry skills needed to manage a sow herd but have feed grain you wish to market through livestock, this enterprise is well-suited for you.

Market Hog Production

While it is difficult to determine what practices are best for a specific area and a given situation, the following approved practices have worked well in St. Mary's county, Maryland.

Buying

Purchase grades 1 and 2 feeder pigs weighing from 40 to 50 pounds. Grade 1 pigs are the best to buy because they are the closest to the ideal feeder pig. Grade 2 is the next in quality. If you are new to market hog production, you may want to buy at graded feeder pig sales to be sure that you get quality pigs. When buying, make sure that the pigs do not have lice, mange, and internal parasites. Castration scars should be healed.

Breeds probably are not as important as the individual grade of pigs. Some of the most commonly found breeds are Yorkshire, Duroc, Hampshire, Chester White, Berkshire and Land Race. Sometimes crosses using these breeds are very prominent at the feeder pig sales.

Housing

Provide a neat, dry dwelling for the hogs. Clean the floors of the pens daily, and keep them free from manure deposits (slotted or perforated floors are helpful). To help prevent your hogs from getting

scours, make sure that the pens are dry and that your hogs get enough fresh air. But, the pens should not be drafty. Also, make sure not to overcrowd the pigs (see Table 1). As they grow you will need to give them more space. Refer to the *Pork Industry Handbook*, The University of Maryland, PIH 11, available at your county Extension office.

Table 1. Recommended pen space

| Weight of hog (pounds) | Space (square feet) |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 0-40 | 3 |
| 41-100 | 4 |
| 101-150 | 6 |
| 151-230 | 8 |

Feeding

Before the pigs arrive the feeders and waterers should be filled and working properly.

Adjust the feeders so that you can get only your index finger underneath the feed gate. Make the pigs work to get the feed down. Feed should not be lying in the feeder.

Monitor the weight of each pig. When the average weight of the group is 125 pounds, change to the second ration (14 percent). Some feeding programs recommend keeping the pigs on a 15- to 16- percent ration until they are marketed. See Table 2 for sample rations.

Table 2. Sample rations for feeder pigs

| Weight of hog (pounds) | Grain | Amount ^a (pounds) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 50-125 | Barley | 534 |
| | Corn (15 percent protein) | 1,066 |
| | Protein supplement (38-40 percent) | 400 |
| 126-225 | Barley | 500 |
| | Corn (14 percent protein) | 1,200 |
| | Protein supplement (38-40 percent) | 300 |

^a The total amount of feed for each weight category is 2,000 pounds.

Insect and Disease Control

Worm and spray pigs within 2 weeks after they arrive at your farm. For worms, mix Tramisol or Atgard with the feed, following directions on the label. A new injectable, Ivomec for Swine, is more expensive per dose, but it takes care of both internal and external parasites.

After the first worming with Tramisol and Atgard, wait 30 days and worm hogs again.

Spray the hogs once every 30 days for lice and mange. Use stock spray concentrate as directed on the label. If you use Ivomec, this will not be necessary.

You may need to vaccinate pigs for Erysipelas and Atrophic Rhinitis.

For fly control in the building, use Ronnel or Emulsified Concentrate (Korlan). Repeat the spraying every 14 to 21 days. Use sugar bait in the windows and edges of buildings. Keep the bait away from drafts and pigs' reach. Hogs may stay in the building while this is done.

If flies persist, close the building and fog with dairy fly spray. This can be done with hogs in the building; however, follow the directions on the label of the product you are using.

Marketing Considerations

Using scales, weigh the hogs periodically. When they reach 225 pounds, take them to market. After market weight is reached, the feed conversion suffers. Strive for 3.0 to 3.3 pounds of feed to produce a pound of pork.

After some success with raising market hogs, you may decide to breed hogs. However, before you undertake farrowing sows, consider the pros and cons of raising market hogs.

Advantages

- **Faster turnover.** With sow herds, the period from the beginning of the operation to the first paycheck takes approximately a year. With purchased pigs, the process takes about 4 months.
- **Fewer management problems.** Starting with well-established pigs (40 to 60 pounds), the producer avoids the high labor period and the demanding management problems associated with breeding herds and newborn pigs.
- **Lower investment risk.** It is less costly for the market hog producer to stop production than the sow herd operator.
- **A supplemental enterprise.** Raising market hogs permits a feed grain producer to expand business by processing grain through hogs while retaining the fertilizer value of the manure.

Disadvantages

- **Costs.** There are significant expenses associated with buying feeder pigs, including transportation and commissions.
- **Penalties.** There are some production "penalties" for purchased feeder pigs because of commingling, genetic uniformity and disease possibilities.
- **Price changes.** The price of feeder pigs changes constantly and is greatly influenced by market hog prices.

Budget of Direct Costs for Market Hog Enterprise

Costs

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Grade 1 or 2 feeder pig (45 lb @ \$1.10/lb) | \$49.50 |
| Shelled yellow corn per pig (10 bu x \$2/bu) | 20.00 |
| Protein supplement per pig (100 lb x \$14/lb) | 14.00 |
| Bedding | 2.50 |
| Transportation | 2.50 |
| Vet supplies | <u>2.50</u> |
| Total | \$81.00 |

Note: This chart does not include indirect costs (such as taxes, rent on machinery and buildings).

Returns

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Market Hog (225 lb x \$50/cwt)..... | \$112.50 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Net Return | \$31.50 |
|-------------------------|----------------|

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