

# Pastured Pork Basics



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# Why Raise Hogs on Pasture?

- The old fashion way?
- Improved quality and flavor?
- Humane? Environmentally Friendly?
- Good Market/Sales Potential?



# What Can we Learn from Commercial Production?

Commercial hog production: Animals are kept inside (shaded and climate controlled). Waste is removed and treated. High biosecurity measures. Hogs are fed precise diets

# So, what do I need to do?

- Provide shade, consider animal comfort
- Consider waste management
- Consider biosecurity- vaccinations, clean practices, etc.
- Pay careful attention to feed

# About Pigs...

- Highly Intelligent Animals- Equal to or greater than Dogs!
  - Naturally curious and explorative
  - They will understand and try to communicate with you
  - Can be a curse or a blessing! Be Prepared!

# Pig Terms

Gilt- Young female pig (Heifer)

Barrow- Castrated male (Steer)

Sow-Adult pregnant/mother female (Cow)

Boar- Uncut male (Bull)

Piglet- Nursing pigs



# Infrastructure

Area requirements: Strong perimeter fence, waterer, flexible interior fencing, shade source

Forested areas?- Different needs?

Plan for as little direct handling as possible

Loading Dock?



# Perimeter Fencing

Outer fencing should be as close to a fortress as you can get it! If a pig gets out, you are in for a challenge!

- Woven wire (high-tensil) with electrified wire at the bottom.
- 3-4 strand HOT fence. Be prepared to make sure the fence is consistently on and develop a regular maintenance plan/schedule (5-6 inch wire spacing)



## Perimeter openings

- Gates- Can be a weak point
- Secure area to load
- Access for feeding/troughs



# Interior Fencing

Polywire seems to be the best/most economical approach-  
four strands on each bottom tread-in post.

Wires above the knee are not necessary



# General Grazing Plans/Paddocks

<https://cefs.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/designing-pasture-subdivisions-for-practical-management-of-hogs-2015.pdf?x47549>

Use these plans in your fencing design if you are starting or retooling your pasture.



## Into the woods!

Paddocks work in the woods and is a necessity for maintaining healthy trees.

Try to find nut bearing trees to take advantage of “free” food that can really improve pork flavor

Monitor trees closely- plant species in between rotations and gaps in raising groups

Broadleaf plants do well- peas, Kale, etc. in the winter in woods.





# Purchasing Pigs



Beginners: Purchase pigs to raise for slaughter first.

Sows can be one of the most dangerous animals on the farm-get familiar with pigs first

Vaccinate, castrate, ID, Ear notch at purchase or as soon as possible after. Nose Ring?

Purchase at weaning if possible for lower initial cost

Heritage and Cross Breeds

Breed selection can have a dramatic effect on meat characteristics and growth on pasture. Research!

Common: Duroc, Berkshire, Hampshire

Hybrids are a growth bonus!

# Biosecurity

Pastured pork is growing! As producers, we must take steps and work together to prevent disease outbreaks!

- Vaccinate!!! Stay ahead of known diseases!
- Sterilize shoes, equipment, etc. when visiting/returning from other farms
- Manage waste and runoff- pigs help with designated bathrooms. Watch them carefully, watch water flows

# Feed

Pigs cannot effectively graze grass/greens for complete nutrition

Use a grain based pig feed- ground whole ear corn, feed mixes, pellets as the main staple

Feed must be pulverized finely for proper absorption- whole corn is not recommended



# Recyclers and Improving Meat Quality

Take advantage of the recycling power of pigs! We all know about kitchen scraps/slop, but what else?

- Garden waste
- Weeds (give a pig lamb's quarter and see true satisfaction!)
- External sources? Friends with a restaurant owner? - Use but not as a sole source- Nutritional balance!



# Selling Pork

Stockyards are not a viable option. Meat sales, piglet sales, breeder sales are the only way to turn a profit.

Meat- direct to consumer is best, there is high demand!

Direct sales= LLC for your farm.

Meat Handler's License

Find your market, make sure your product will have return customers

# For the love of Pete! Can we talk about Bacon already!?!

It is challenging to find processors that will cure bacon that be sold as bacon- pork belly is different- you will have added cost

It is not permissible to cure and repackage pork without a license.

Use it as an opportunity to educate buyers on developing recipes and cooking methods. A very rewarding process! Adulting class for the Millennials!



# Links

<https://cefs.ncsu.edu/field-research/alternative-swine-unit/>

<http://www.pork.org/pqa-plus-certification/>

<http://articles.extension.org/pages/27050/baby-pig-management-birth-to-weaning>

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0902/ANR-0902.pdf>

<http://onpasture.com/2014/04/21/how-to-raise-pigs-on-pasture/>

<https://animalwelfareapproved.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/TAFS-16-Nose-ringing-pigs-v3-updated.pdf>

