**Helpful Tips on Raising Your Showpig**

**BRINGING THE PIGS HOME** - Is my pen ready? Feeder? Water? Bedding? How am I going to haul my pig? Is it a warm, bedded box or trailer?

When buying pigs, try very hard to make them as comfortable as possible. Many times you are taking them out of a very warm environment and changing everything in their life. Find out what the pigs have been eating and possibly buy a bag or see if they can get you some feed to use when you get them home. The idea is to make the transition as calm and comfortable as possible.

What were the pigs drinking from when I bought them? If a pig has been on a nipple water, sometimes it will take them some time to get used to a pan or bowl. They need plenty of fresh, clean water during this transition. I like to make 2 sources of water available the first couple of days they are home.

A shot of Penicillin or Exceed is a good idea just from the prevention side of things. Remember, other than weaning, this is the most stressful time in your pigs’ life. Do everything you can to make them comfortable.

**FIRST FEED**— There a lot of good feeds out there. Chose the one that is easiest for you to get and will always be available when you need feed.

The first feed you get should be a Starter feed that is very palatable. It will need to be about 19.5-20.0% Protein, 5% fat and 1.3% Lysine. Do not dump the whole bag in the feeder the first day. The first three days simply hand feed them so you will know how much they are eating. It will also give you time every day to let the pigs get used you.

**GROWING PERIOD**—50-150 POUNDS

This is a critical time in the pigs’ life because so many changes are taking place. First, we are setting the table and filling the plate for the future of this pig. All the critical muscle development is taking place in this period, so it is time to just feed the pig, let them grow naturally and gain all the muscle for a later date.

You never want to hold or slow down a pig in this part of their life. We can accomplish this later with much better results.

The feed you will need should be a 18% Protein, 4.0-4.5% fat and 1.2-1.3% Lysine. This is a good time in your pig’s life to eat and just be happy. Time should be spent daily brushing and even several times a week letting them out of their pens and exercising.

At this point in your pigs life it is time to start a daily brushing and exercise program. Every day make sure that the bedding is clean and dry and if need be, remove wet or soiled bedding. MY GOLDEN RULE; WHITE AND BLU-BUTT HOGS—NO SUN OR MUDHOLES!!!!! If your white hog ever becomes stained or sunburned, they will never be as white and shiny as you need to be to compete at the top of the class. On the colored hogs daily sunlight will be a big benefit to them as it will darken their skin and when you do show them they will be shiny and dark colored.

**WORMING**—Worming needs to take place 3 times in your pigs’ life while you have it. After you get you pig home and it is adjusted well, worm them. I suggest SafeGuard wormer and it is easy to use and easy to find. Then worm the pig every 30 days after that just like clock work. If you do go to jackpot shows and the pig is around other pigs, you might want to do it more often. But at least 3 times during the time you have your pig, you should worm it.

**150 POUNDS—SHOW DAY**

Now is the time we get our calculators out and do the math. At some point it will be time to start a weighing process and determining where we want the pig to be shown. As I said earlier, up until 150 pounds we are just going to let them eat and grow.

At 150 pounds we can start to manipulate the nutrition somewhat as far as protein, and fat. All of this will depend on each pig. They are different genetically and the way they look. So you will have to determine does my pig need more or less protein—more or less fat, etc.

I suggest to the families I work with that at this point we are going to start weighing the pigs once a week and charting their growth. We have an end point as far as weight goes and if I am going to hold one it will be in the 150 to 200 pound range. Our goal is to leave at least 21 days before the show for maximum weight gain and 30 days of good growth at the end is even better.

For example, if your show is August 10. You have decided that you pig will show and look its best at 270 pounds. We would like the last 21 days for the pig to be able to gain 2.5 pounds per day. If you multiply 21 X2.5 that number is 52.5 pounds. So 21 days back from August 10 is July 20.and you have already determined that your pig will look its best at 270 pounds, then on July 21 it should weigh no more than 217 pounds.

THE KEY TO BEING SUCCESSFUL IN THE SHOWRING IS SUCCESSFULLY MANAGING WEIGHT GAIN. AS MUCH TIME AND EFFORT NEEDS TO GO INTO THIS AS TIME SPENT BUYING, FEEDING AND FITTING. IN TODAYS SHOWRING PIGS MUST BE FULL, FRESH AND HAVE NO STALE APPEARANCE. WE CANNOT HOLD AT THE END AND GET THIS LOOK.

**HOLDING RATION**—If we do have to slow one down in the 150-200 pound range there are several things we can do and one important thing we cannot do— NEVER WITHOLD WATER FROM YOUR PIG. IT IS CRUEL AND WILL ONLY BE DETRIMENTAL IN THE BIG PICTURE. There are products out there that combine high levels of Protein, Fiber and Fat. All of these are important to maintain as much muscle shape while slowing the growth. If you are unable to buy one of these products, then the following ration has worked well and will get you close. Remember, that while slowing the pigs’ growth, it is still vital that you weigh often to maintain our goal at the end:

**HOLDING OR SLOWING RATION:**

1 pound of your regular feed—daily 1 pound of Steamed Rolled oats—daily 6 ounces of a Fat source (liquid or dry)—can use chopped hay to make them feel full—daily All the water they want.

Normally, this will give us about 1 pound of gain per day. CAUTION—ALL PIGS ARE DIFFERENT—SOME WILL GAIN MORE—SOME LESS—THAT IS WHY WE NEED TO KEEP WEIGHING. WE NEVER WANT TO HOLD THEM TO LESS THAN 1 POUND OF GAIN PER DAY.

**PAYLEAN**—Is a tremendous tool in feeding and fitting show pigs, when fed correctly. FOLLOW ALL LABEL DIRECTIONS AS FAR AS MIXING AND BLENDING ANY COMPANIES PAYLEAN PRODUCT.

Paylean works wonders in several situations. For weight gain it is very good. Pigs will grow extremely fast when fed this This is one reason why I talk so strongly about holding pigs at the lighter weights before you are feeding Paylean. It is virtually impossible to feed Paylean and hold growth. It does not make sense.

Paylean will also add muscle and shape especially to the Loin, rump and ham area. I have always used a step up program with Pay lean and it has worked for us. We start slowly with about 2 grams for a week, just to see how the pig re-acts to the Pay lean. If we see no problems, we increase to 4.5 grams and so forth. It is also of utmost importance to feed at least 16% Protein, maybe probably higher or added fat at a higher level as it will really help reduce the stress that Pay lean can cause. REMEMBER—FOLLOW ALL LABEL DIRECTIONS WHEN FEEDING PAYLEAN.

**OTHER TIPS**

**WALKING PIGS**—I don’t personally think you can walk your pig too much. At least 30 days (you can start as early as you’d like) before the show I tell all the families I work with to walk them daily until they think the pig has had enough—then go twenty more minutes. This will help the stamina of the pig if you get into a situation where you are driving a long time before the judge. Also, this will help your pig when you get to the show as it has been in and out of your pen at home and it will not be a strange situation.

**HAIR AND SKIN**—Very important in the show ring. I think that clean dry bedding will allow your pig to have good skin. Daily brushing and grooming will help the hair be soft and when you clip, the hair will be manageable and clip up nicely. Use a cheap shampoo daily on their hair and skin—just use some type of product whether it be specifically for pigs or not daily and you will be fine. We spoke earlier about dark colored hogs needing sunlight and you must do this 30 days before the show. You must do this daily.

**CLIPPING**- This is very important and can make your hog look so much better presented. However, I think it very important that we go for a very natural look— as if you can’t even tell they have been clipped. This is where the clean, dry bedding issue becomes so very important. Clipping should be done as close to your show date as possible, so the pig looks fresh, just as you do after a hair cut. The hair needs to be left at about one half inch over the body. The head, face and underline should be clipped much closer many people use different blade attachments and blend as they go. For instance, going from the head to the neck to the body would probably be 3 different attachments as to go from very short on the face, a touch more on the neck blending it into the shoulder and body leaving roughly a half inch of hair.

There are several YouTube videos demonstrating this technique.

**Water**— I usually have the families add a can of Ensure or Boost (VANILLA) Pigs really like it and it is a good product for them or Gatorade to add electrolytes and flavor to the water. Feeding should be done in something similar to what they have eaten out of at home. What we are trying to accomplish is changing very little of the pigs routine when we get to the show,

At the show, we normally feed several times a day in an attempt to keep the pig eating. I find that if you keep them just a little hungry they will always want to eat at the show and it is very important that they eat and stay full.

I am sure there are more things we could talk about and the above is a basic guide that has worked well for us. Many of you probably do some things different and that is fine. This is a guideline for new families. Good Luck!!

Don’t hesitate to email or call for any questions.

[rickannw@gmail.com](mailto:rickannw@gmail.com)

Home: (920)982-4555

Cell: (920)279-2766

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