

SWINE PROJECT MEETING

Planning for Success

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In order to plan for your success this coming year you must first answer numerous questions and understand what is expected of you. First lets try to answer some questions frequently asked about 4-H and the swine project. These are things you need to know and we will discuss any other information or answer other questions you might have about the project. Here we go –

- What shows do I plan to attend?
- Will my county hog make it to Houston, San Antonio, etc.?
- What age should my pig be when I buy him?
- What are the best breeds to show?
- How much should I spend on my project?
- Where can I get a good show pig?
- What are the county rules? Weight Limits, Barrows or Gilts, etc.
- Who do I call for help?
- Where are we going to keep our pigs?
- How important is it to start with a good pig?
- What equipment and pen space do I need?
- What do I do once I get a pig?
- How do I find out about meetings and deadlines

1) What shows do I plan to attend? In Texas, we are fortunate to have numerous shows such as; Houston, San Antonio, Ft. Worth, State Fair of Texas, Tri State Fair, San Angelo, Austin, Top of Texas and County. This is not counting the numerous jackpot shows that occur each year. These shows spend a tremendous amount of money and effort so that we can have a livestock show. Why do they do this? It is solely for the purpose of education. These shows make very little money on the junior shows and do it for the purpose of providing educational opportunities for youth in agriculture. 4-H is here for the same purpose. Schools let you out to participate for the same reasons. We are very fortunate to have people in this state that care about our program and the youth involved in agriculture. Don't forget the purpose of the program is to provide youth with opportunities to learn and gain valuable experience.

It is great to win, but the things you will remember about your swine project will be the friends you make, the time you spend as a family, your experiences with other 4-H members and what you learn in the project. Remember, you get out of this program what you put into it. Get Involved!!!!

“Its what you learn, after you know it all, that really counts.” John Wooden

When are the shows this year:

Top Of Texas - January 5-7
Happy Local Show - January 13
Randall County Show - January 19-20
Randall County Sale - January 22
Ft. Worth - January 29 - Feb. 3
San Antonio - February 9-17
Houston - March 10-17

2) What age should my pig be when I buy them? The county show is in January and the major shows follow in February and March. The keys to remember when making this decision is; – weight limits for county are 200 - 260 lbs.. If you are over 260 you will not be allowed to show. Under 200 lbs. will be considered a prospect. Weight limits for major shows will be 230 - 270 lbs.

– pigs should be 5 ½ months to 7 months of age at the target show. The ideal age would be 6 months to 6 ½ months of age. This means that if you are just going to county you will need a pig born between June 15 and August 1. If you are going to Houston, the ideal age will be between August 15 and September 15. This gives you an idea of what age to buy for what show. Do not buy a July 15 hog expecting to make to Houston. It may make it but you **will not** do well. (Ft Worth - July 1 to August 15; San Antonio - July 15 to September 1. You need to plan for success.

- don't let someone talk you into being beat before you start
- Blake's Grand Champion barrow was about 6 ½ months when he showed at San Antonio and weighed about 275 lbs. the day he showed. No way he makes it to Houston!!!
- Pigs sold in October will be too old to show at Houston. Be patient!!!!
- Breed will play a part in growth with crosses growing faster than purebreds.

3) What are the best breeds to show? The very best hog I can find for my money. I know kids have preferences but the best policy is to find the very best hog you can find for the money that fits the show you plan to attend.

4) How much does it cost? As much as you want to spend. Pigs will sell from \$100 to upwards of several thousands of dollars. You are extremely lucky if you get a \$100 pig to turn out and extremely stupid if you are paying several thousand dollars for one. Realistically, plan to spend between \$150 to \$750 if you want a good chance at making the sale at Houston and making your project come out in the end. We have had \$100 pigs make the sale and \$1000 pigs get the truck so there is no guarantee, but finding the best pig for the least money is the trick. Get some help and you will greatly increase your odds. Also, realize that when you have specific requests such as a certain breed than you narrow your odds of getting the best pigs for the least money. My suggestion is to determine what you can spend and then go get the best animal available for that money. Making the sale at county has been good for about \$300 and you can expect about \$1000 for making the sale at San Antonio or Houston. Feed will cost you approximately \$200. You do the math but remember that nothing is free and your experiences and time together are worth something.

5) Where do I find a pig? Show pig breeders and pig sales are the most common place to locate hogs to show. Many people let someone help them locate pigs and there are several

knowledgeable individuals who will help you. I will spend the next 2 months traveling the country looking for pigs if you need help. If you don't have the experience or knowledge to do this don't try because starting with a good pig is key to ending up with a good pig. Ask for help and you will increase your odds in starting with a chance. Remember, pigs will only be as good as they can genetically be and it costs the same to feed a sorry one. One other thing to remember is that all breeders have sorry hogs and all of them think their hogs are the best. Buy one that has a chance!! **Remember, barrows only!!!!**

6) What are realistic expectations for success at the shows? The sky is the limit. Any one of you can expect to have a champion at Houston and should go into it with those expectations. Hard work, a good pig, and a little luck still works in this business. Start with a good one and get all you can out of him and let the chips lay where they may.

“Above all challenge yourselves. You may well surprise yourself at what you can accomplish.”

7) What are the rules for the shows? We have already talked about weight limits but you should know about your animal and when deadlines occur. It starts with tag orders and these are due in early November. Then you will need to attend project meetings like tonight's to learn about your project. Entry nights are set for you in late November so don't miss this activity. As far as the show is concerned, learn the rules and what time activities happen at the show. **Also, remember if you do not pass your animal does not show.**

8) What if I have questions and how do I learn? Ask someone who knows! All of us started at the same level and **no questions are stupid questions.** We will have project meetings all fall to discuss selection, feeding, nutrition, grooming, and showmanship. The first step is to come to the meetings and learn all you can and do not be afraid to ask questions. There are folks (master swine leaders and swine leaders) that have been assigned to help you. We also have assigned 4-Hers and parents to help families that are new to the project. Of course, I am always here to help. If you don't ask for or accept help, you are the only one to blame. We do this as a team as you will soon find out. There are no secret formulas for success and there is nothing that most anyone in this program would not share.

9) What about school days and excused absences? 4Hers are excused from school just like any other extra curricular activities. We must notify the school when you are involved and you must be passing in order to participate. No Pass No Show!! I will notify the school prior to the activity and ask if all 4Hers are passing. I will also send you a copy of what is sent to the school so that any mistakes can be taken care of prior to leaving. My suggestion is to talk to the school prior to the activity and make sure everything is alright. Do your work in class and we won't have any problems. The great news is that Houston is during spring break and this will help considerably. Communication is the key when dealing with school. Let them know what you are doing and let me know what you are doing. All problems can be avoided with communication to me and the school officials.

10) How important is it to start with a good one? It is the key to success. A pig can only reach his potential. If his genetic potential is SORRY, he will be SORRY. If his genetic

potential is to be a champion and you do all you need to do, he will be a champion. There is no substitute for a great start!!!!

11) How do I find out about meetings and deadlines?

4-H NEWSLETTER

12) Where can I keep my pig? We are fortunate to have pens at the Canyon and Randall Ag Farms. If you have no place to keep your animals, let me know.

13) How should I build my pens?

– Pens should be long and narrow with room for plenty of exercise. The feeder should be on one end and the water on the other.

– Houses need to be small and open to the south. Wooden floors or concrete are ideal for houses because it keeps pigs off the ground. We need to keep hair from getting stained and coarse.

– Sand or concrete with shavings are the best bedding for pens. You need to keep pens dry. Mud holes are a no - no. Remember the hair.

– Bedding is very important. Straw is the best because it's soft and absorbs moisture. Shavings work great but do not provide much warmth. A combination of these two is ideal. Coarse hay such as cane will not work well because of the skin and hair. Straw should be changed regularly (once per week) unless it's wet and then more frequent. When it's cold pigs stay in their house and wet their hay.

– You should let your pigs tell you what he likes. If he is always in his house it is too cold.

– Remember it's all about comfort. Warm, dry and without draft will keep your pig happy and keep his skin and hair presentable to the judge.

14) What do I need to get my pig started?

– Pens ready as close to the above as possible.
– Something to put water in that will stay clean and not freeze. Black barrels with water nipples work well but anything will work. If water freezes, you need to haul water to the pigs.

– Something to feed in that will hold feed and eliminate waste. Pigs should be given all they want to eat at the beginning stages of their life. A pig's muscle development continues until he reaches about 150 lbs.. Limiting his feed before this time does not make sense.

– Have medicine on hand just in case. Penicillin or Excenel are your best bets.

– Get a good transition feed to get your pigs started. 20% with a good medication.

Mormans – 12006 move to 11273

Lindners – 632 move to 685

Sunglo – 700 move to 101

Suthers – Accelerate move to Showtimes

Acco – ?

Good Luck and we will see you at the next project meeting!!!!