



## How Much Hard Work Does It Take to Be Successful

By Danna Goss

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Preparing your animal for various shows and state fairs is crucial to your success. It takes many long hours of practice and preparation before the show to be successful. This article contains information that will help you to prepare for show day.

From the time you buy your pig at a sale or choose from the ones that you have raised, it is important that you spend time in the pig's pen every day. Getting your pigs tame and accustomed to people in different situations is an important beginning. If you have animals that are hard to tame down, try giving them treats like vanilla wafers. This treat usually helps calm them down and gets them accustomed to people. While spending time in your animal's pen, make sure the pen is kept clean. You should rake in any holes they may have dug and make sure there are no unused pans, troughs, wire, or anything that may allow for any chance of injury.

Every day you should brush your pig and make sure that its skin is in good condition. Use a soft bristle brush to brush your pig. You will need to condition and shampoo your pig many times before the show day. Be sure to use a mild shampoo and not get water in their ears during washings. Using a small amount of oil each night on your pig will help keep their skin in good condition, but be sure NOT to do this during the day or on hot summer nights. Your pigs may overheat if the oil is on them when the temperature is high.

If you have a white pig, you have some special challenges that you need to be aware of. First, you need to watch them closely during the summer for sunburn. You may need to put a sunscreen on your white pigs to prevent sunburn. A low cost, SPF 30 sunscreen works well. Second, you want to be sure that you wash your white pigs more often to prevent staining their hide. There are many purple-colored shampoos especially for white hogs that work very well to get them clean. Never oil white hogs unless they are inside of a barn due to the fact that the oil will make sunburn occur even more rapidly. Should your pigs get a sunburn, be sure to use an aloe vera lotion on their skin to help it heal more quickly.

Trim your pig's hair before going to a show. The ideal clip job looks very natural and is smooth throughout the pig. If you do not have experience in trimming pigs, don't be afraid to get help from someone in your club that is experienced in clipping. An unclipped pig is better than a poorly trimmed pig.

Pigs are very smart animals that you can train just as you can a dog. It is important to find a big, open area to practice. This area should be far away from your pig's regular pen so that your pig will know it is leaving its normal area. Be sure to be consistent as you train your pig. Your goal is to get them used to the same commands and what you want them to do. Be repetitive in how you train your pig. You are your pig's guide and you want them to understand that you are in control.

As you drive your pig to the practice area two to three times per week, work on driving them at the same pace that you want during the show. Use your whip or cane anytime you drive your pig, just like you will be doing at the show. Your practice time should be used just like you are in the ring at the fair. Have your mom or dad stand in the middle of your practice area and act like they are the judge. Practice keeping your pig in the middle of the ring, off of the fence and out of the corners. Remember, what you practice at home is what your pig will do at the show!

Be sure to remember to give your pigs the proper nutrition and water, especially during the hot summer months. Try to weigh your pigs every two to three weeks in the months leading up to the show. This will allow you to know how your pigs are gaining and where they stand as to your show's weight limits. If your pig is getting a little fat or too heavy, cut back feed, but do not starve them. Judges like lean pigs, but not pigs that appear to be suffering from malnutrition. NEVER deprive your animal of water. It is the largest part of your pig's nutrition and is how your animal stays cool in the summer.

The key to being successful in the show ring is to do your homework way before you get to the show. If you decide not to work hard until you put them in the trailer, you have waited too long. Practice daily and spend time with your project each day. I am positive that your hard work will pay off. Good luck to all of you in your endeavors in the show ring. Showing livestock with 4-H and FFA will be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. The people that you meet at different shows and events will become lifelong friends.

*About the author, Danna Goss (at the time the article was written):*

*Raised on her family's hog farm in Duncan, OK, Danna's interest in swine began at an early age. Danna and her brother, Craig, showed in Oklahoma until 1986 when her dad, Rick Maloney, went to work for the Hampshire Swine Registry. The family continued to show hogs as they moved throughout the country. The family's show success included Grand Champions at the Illinois State Fair as well as Danna's involvement on the Illinois State 4-H Livestock Judging Team.*

*Danna continued with livestock judging at the collegiate level, first at Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College and then at Oklahoma State University. She received her bachelor's degree in animal science at OSU and then followed up with her master's degree in elementary education from Southwestern Oklahoma State University. With her husband, Kent, her family now raises purebred Hampshire breeding stock as well as York, crossbred, and Chester show pigs. Her family shows hogs on a local, state, and national level.*