



Show Pig Success Equation

Families across the U.S. involve themselves with junior swine projects for many different reasons with varying goals in mind. For some, the experience of just having a pig to take care of on a daily basis provides a young person with a lot of responsibility. For others, placing well at the county level is a goal. Some have the goal of making the premium sale at a major livestock show; while others make the commitment to go "all out" in an effort to win a major livestock show. This article will focus on feeding techniques for those individuals who have the ultimate goal in mind of consistently performing well at state and national shows.

Ultimately, the factors that distinguish one as an advanced exhibitor are the level of commitment to the show pig project and the ability to "read" show pigs. "Reading" show pigs is simply being able to analyze the structure, design, amount of body fat, and muscle score of pigs throughout the feeding process. Being skillful in evaluating these criteria enables one to make important decisions throughout the feeding process. Many factors will be discussed in this article; however, for one to be ultimately successful, determination and total commitment is needed by the young person as well as his/her parents. To be successful, it takes many long hours of hard work, practice, and preparation. Five major components of the champion show pig equation must be in place to achieve a high level of success in today's show ring:

- Genetics
- Health
- Nutrition
- Management
- Showmanship

If just one of these components is missing or deficient, the chances of success are greatly diminished.

Every day is critical in the life of a show pig. Showing pigs may be compared to playing the game of football. Football is said to be a game of inches. Those who perform to a high level in all areas of the game and pay attention to details make it to the play-offs. Many times the outcome of a game is decided literally by an inch here and an inch there. The same holds true in the show pig arena. Those who do the little things right every day and pay the closest attention to detail are those who consistently win.

Genetics

The first component of the equation for success is genetics. A show pig's genetic potential is determined by its sire and dam. It is important to start with a pig that possesses the genetic potential to perform in the show ring. Only so much can be done with a pig possessing average genetic potential.

It is crucial that an exhibitor find out who will be judging the target show. Know the type of hog preferred by the judge and become familiar with that individual's priorities and preferences. It is then important to seek a breeder that can supply the type of hog that fits the description of the ideal hog based on the judge's preference. Attending local, regional, state, and national events will help an exhibitor become familiar with a judge's preferences and the location of high-quality genetic breeders. This knowledge will be extremely valuable when seeking a show pig with the genetic potential to perform in the show ring.

Health

A sound, comprehensive health program, which includes routine vaccination and deworming schedules, should be developed with the assistance of a qualified veterinarian. When show pigs are purchased, the buyer should secure the health history from the seller. Knowing previous treatments and vaccinations is valuable to continuation of a sound health program. Exhibitors should implement sanitation and biosecurity procedures to help prevent disease transmission.

Nutrition/Management

Without question, a sound nutrition program is crucial for a show pig to express its full genetic potential. The feeding phase of show pigs can be divided into three key periods:

- Phase I - purchase to ~100 lb body weight
- Phase II - ~100 lb to 200 lb body weight
- Phase III - ~200 lb to desired weight at the time of the targeted show

Phase I

The timing of purchasing and receiving show pigs is very critical. Young show pigs may endure and must overcome many challenges by the time they are ready to be sold and placed on feed. These challenges include – pre-weaning

environment, weaning, and stress of handling. Because of these stressors, it is critical that young show pigs be handled properly and fed a high-quality "receiving ration." Frequently, pigs are purchased from many sources and co-mingled. These pigs have most likely had significant differences in disease exposure.

The preferred receiving ration is MoorMan's® ShowTec® Burst Starter™ No. 24020, which contains ADM Animal Nutrition™ innovative, patent-pending products and technologies, such as Energy Burst™, CitriStim®, Easyzyme®*, and PremiDex™. This ration should be fed until desired "bloom" is reached, and then pigs should be switched to MoorMan's ShowTec Starter/Grower No. 11148, which contains fenbendazole (a dewormer) for 10 to 12 days. For receiving pigs that are more developed and muscular, MoorMan's ShowTec Sale Burst No. 21206 is an option.

During Phase I, pigs should be allowed "free-choice" access to feed. Feeders should be cleaned daily. It is very important to avoid overcrowding newly purchased show pigs. Limit the number of pigs per pen to two or three, housed in a pen at least 8 ft. by 16 ft. By the time the pigs reach approximately 100 lb going into Phase II, pigs should be in individual pens. Light-colored pigs should always be fed in locations that are totally shaded. These pigs should be housed in facilities where they will not receive direct sunlight. Sunburn during any phase will cost valuable development time.

Following the 10-12 day feeding period for Starter/Grower with fenbendazole, pigs should be critiqued to determine if muscle volume is ideal, or if more or less muscle is desired. For pigs needing more muscle development, MoorMan's ShowTec Sale Burst No. 21206 is recommended. This ration helps maximize the early muscle development of show pigs.

If muscle volume is considered closer to ideal, MoorMan's ShowTec BB 18 No. 18241 (18% crude protein and 3.75% fat) is recommended. This product also provides several ADM innovative, patent-pending and proprietary feed ingredients along with the protein needed for muscle growth and development, and energy and fiber components essential for giving pigs a "filled out" appearance.

This is also the ideal time in the show pig's growth stage to begin top-dressing MoorMan's ShowTec MoorFlex™, which is designed to enhance joint flexibility. MoorMan's ShowTec EatMoor™ is also recommended to be top-dressed at a rate of 2-4 oz per head day to encourage a healthier appetite throughout the feeding process.

When an exhibitor chooses to incorporate rolled oats into the show pig ration, we recommend using MoorMan's ShowTec Showts No. 12349 rather than straight rolled oats because Showts also supplies minerals and vitamins that would otherwise be lacking from the diet when supplementing with just rolled oats.

During Phase I, it is important that the exhibitor get into the pig's pen on a daily basis. This allows the pig to become familiar with the exhibitor; thus, the pig will not perceive the exhibitor as a threat. This process takes time and patience on behalf of the exhibitor. Initially, sit in the pen for

approximately 30 minutes daily, allowing pigs to approach. As pigs become gentle, begin to touch them. The importance of performing these tasks cannot be overemphasized and will go a long way toward helping exhibitors become successful in the show ring.

An important management factor is to bed show pigs on high-quality bedding at all times. Fluffy, white, pine wood shavings are preferred by many individuals. This bedding prevents staining of light-colored hogs, provided the area where the pigs defecate is cleaned on a daily basis.

Phase II

Phase II begins once the show pig reaches approximately 100 lb. It is critical to weigh show pigs weekly starting early in Phase II. One should determine the number of days to the target show and adjust the pig's feed intake to allow an average daily gain for each individual pig to reach its target weight. Some important decisions will need to be made early in Phase II. Hand-feeding or limit-feeding is often initiated during this phase. Many pigs are initially placed on 6 lb of feed daily, with the feeding rate adjusted up or down to achieve the desired average daily gain.

Show pigs should be analyzed for structural problems and muscle volume. Pigs that are becoming too heavily muscled should be placed on MoorMan's ShowTec 14.5/6 No. 14560 (14.5% crude protein and 6% fat). If muscle volume is ideal, but additional fat cover is desired, feed MoorMan's ShowTec Hi Fat 18 No. 18007 (18% crude protein and 7% fat). This product will produce a "bulkier" appearance when fed over time. If the show pig still needs to lay down more fat cover, top-dress MoorMan's MoorFat™ No. 235 at 2 to 4 oz per head daily or Alliance 3-D™ No. 12079 at 1 oz per 100 lb body weight daily. For pigs that are considered on the verge of becoming too heavily muscled, MoorMan's ShowTec Hi Fat 16 No. 16700 is the product of choice. This feed contains 16% crude protein and 7% fat, and allows pigs to stay more ideal in their muscle volume while adding more condition and body.

During Phase II, the use of a top-dress product can be initiated. As show pigs approach maturity, many will begin to display signs of over-conditioning. If this occurs, top-dress MoorMan's ShowTec Pig Navigator No. 10200 at 8 oz (0.5 lb) daily until the desired "top shape" is achieved, at which point Pig Navigator should be decreased to a maintenance level of 4 oz daily.

Training

At 125-150 lb body weight, it is important to begin training show pigs. Pigs should be handled on a daily basis and become exposed to a show ring environment. Start by getting the pigs out of their pens for short periods of time. Gradually increase the show ring training to 20 minutes per head daily. Pigs should be taught to respond to a show quirt and "drive" in the show ring in a calm manner.

Phase III

Critical decisions need to be made during Phase III (200 lb to show weight). The use of Paylean®** during the final feeding phase may be considered. Paylean is designed to be fed to finishing swine weighing not less than 150 lb for the last 45 to 90 lb of gain in rations containing at least 16% crude protein. The needed level of Paylean depends greatly on the individual pig. If a pig is deficient in muscle, 9 grams of Paylean/ton of feed should be considered for 21 to 25 days prior to the show. Average-muscled pigs may only need Paylean at 4.5 grams/ton from day 25 to 10 days prior to the target show, and then the level increased to 9 grams/ton for the last 10 days prior to the target show.

Finally, pigs that are heavily muscled may not need Paylean or may only need supplementation at 4.5 grams/ton for 14 to 16 days prior to the target show. It is extremely important that each pig be analyzed individually to determine the appropriate Paylean usage rate. Paylean has been used to achieve the shape and volume of muscle desired for an individual pig, without making the pig look unnatural. Two options are available to provide Paylean:

- MoorMan's ShowTec Lean Maximizer® No. 11102, a top-dress designed to be fed at 2-4 oz daily with a 16% crude protein complete feed
- MoorMan's ShowTec Finisher with Paylean No. 11256 (18% protein and 2.5% fat), a complete feed containing 9 grams per ton of Paylean
- For those pigs not needing Paylean yet need a little more shape and muscle mass, MoorMan's ShowTec Final Burst No. 24440 should be fed

After the show pig reaches 200 lb, exhibitors may choose to use MoorMan's ShowTec MoorBody™ at 0.5-2 lb per head daily to sculpt pig appearance. When feeding during periods of hot weather, Fire Extinguisher™ S can be top-dressed to help show pigs withstand the effects of heat stress. During periods of stress to help maintain fluid and electrolyte balance and maintain freshness, we recommend using MoorMan's ShowTec Rehydrate™ No. 88820 which can be used as a top-dress or drench. Another excellent product for animals subjected to stress, such as during illness, hauling or during show time, is the use of Cellarator Turbo Paste, a 3-in-1 fast-acting oral paste. This product combines probiotics, electrolytes, and vitamin E to enhance performance, deter dehydration and helps combat stressful situations.

For show pigs that reach desired "finish" ahead of show date, MoorMan's ShowTec Time Out™ No. 00000 can be used to hold the pig's finished appearance by helping maintain muscle shape, finish, and body condition. For the last two meals prior to a show, MoorMan's ShowTec Show Prep No. 12303 may be fed to help keep pigs alert, bright, and hydrated while enhancing fill and expression.

The final component in the equation for success is showmanship. The importance of presenting one's show pig to its potential cannot be overemphasized. Many times a show pig is placed higher than it should, simply because the exhibitor had the ring awareness to "hide" the pig at the appropriate time. Exhibitors need to use showmanship techniques to accentuate the good qualities of their pigs. The combination of a "good" show pig and excellent showmanship ability are critical to success. The best way for young exhibitors to gain insight on how to become good at showmanship is to observe older exhibitors who have mastered showmanship. Adults should point out the positive qualities of these individuals and have the young exhibitor practice these techniques at home.

Conclusion

Total commitment to a show pig project is essential to become a feeder and exhibitor of champion show pigs. Genetics, management, nutrition, and showmanship are critical components in the equation for success. If any of these factors are deficient or missing, the chance of success is greatly diminished. For those who are willing to make the sacrifices, the show pig project can provide a great deal of enjoyment for young people and their parents.

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