

Editorial

Impacts on sow breeding

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Pig farming or hog farming is the raising and breeding of domestic pigs as livestock, and is a branch of animal husbandry. Pigs are farmed principally for food (e.g. pork, bacon, gammon) and skins. Pigs are amenable to many different styles of farming: intensive commercial units, commercial free range enterprises, or extensive farming (being allowed to wander around a village, town or city, or tethered in a simple shelter or kept in a pen outside the owner's house). Historically, farm pigs were kept in small numbers and were closely associated with the residence of the owner, or in the same village or town. They were valued as a source of meat and fat, and for their ability to convert inedible food into meat, and were often fed household food waste when kept on a homestead. Pigs have been farmed to dispose of municipal garbage on a large scale.

All these forms of pig farm are in use today, though intensive farms are by far the most popular, due to their potential to raise a large amount of pigs in a very cost-efficient manner. In developed nations, commercial farms house thousands of pigs in climate-controlled buildings. Pigs are a popular form of livestock, with more than one billion pigs butchered each year worldwide, 100 million of them in the USA. The majority of pigs are used for human food but also supply skin, fat and other materials for use as clothing, ingredients for processed foods, cosmetics, and medical use. Almost all of the pig can be used as food. Preparations of pig parts into specialties include: sausage (and casings made from the intestines), bacon, Gammon, ham, skin into pork scratchings, feet into trotters, head into a meat jelly called head cheese (brawn), and consumption of the liver, chitterlings, and blood (blood pudding or brown pudding)

PRODUCTION AND TRADE

Pigs are farmed in many countries, though the main consuming countries are in Asia, meaning there is a significant international and even intercontinental trade in live and slaughtered pigs. Despite having the world's largest herd, China is a net importer of pigs, and has been increasing its imports during its economic development. The largest exporters of pigs are the United States, the European Union, and Canada. As an example, more than half of Canadian production (22.8 million pigs) in 2008 was exported, going to 143 countries. Older pigs will consume eleven to nineteen litres (three to five US gallons) of water per day. Among meat animals, pigs have a lower feed conversion ratio than cattle, which can provide an advantage in lower unit price of meat because the cost of animal feed per kilogram or pound of resultant meat is lower. However, there are also many other economic variables in meat production and distribution, so the price differential of pork and beef at the point of retail sale does not always correspond closely to the differential in feed conversion ratios. Nonetheless, the favorable ratio often tends to make pork affordable relative to beef.

The way in which a stockperson interacts with pigs affects animal welfare which in some circumstances can correlate with production measures. Many routine interactions can cause fear, which can result in stress and decreased production. There are various methods of handling pigs which can be separated into those which lead to positive or negative reactions by the animals. These reactions are based on how the pigs interpret a handler's behavior.

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