There are many rewards and benefits to participating in a livestock project. But, it is also a huge, family-wide commitment. Before you sign-up for any livestock project and before you bring home an animal, you need to be sure you fully understand the time, space, and financial commitment you are about to make. Take time to evaluate and talk about this information before signing up for any livestock project.

**WHERE WILL HE LIVE?**

Plan ahead and ensure you have a good place to keep a pig BEFORE you buy him! Some areas do not allow farm animals. Find out if local regulations restrict where or if you can keep a pig. Once you’ve determined you can have pigs on your property you’ll need to determine if you have an ideal location for a pig pen. Pig housing does not have to be fancy or expensive. It can be homemade or retrofitted from some other structure.

Pigs MUST HAVE SHADE!! They cannot sweat so they cool themselves by lying in the shade and rooting in the mud/dirt. You can provide shade with trees or a structure with a sloping roof and no sides. A shelter that allows pigs to escape inclement weather should be provided. It needs to stay dry in wet weather and free from dust in warm weather.

Plan for about 10 square feet of shelter space per pig and 200 square feet of pen space. This allows for ample room for each pig to lie down, move around, and eat. Remember to provide access to plenty of SHADE! Pens will need to be safe and secure. Pigs are notorious escape artists, use latches that require thumbs to open. Predators (coyotes, feral dogs, and other wildlife) can be a huge problem. Fencing and facilities will need to keep pigs in and predators out.

Remove any sharp edges and complete any repairs necessary before you bring your pig home to prevent unnecessary injuries. With pre-planning, attention to details, and good management, you can raise a pig successfully in simple facilities.

**HOW MUCH TIME DOES HE REQUIRE?**

To properly care for your pig and get the most out of your project you will want to spend as much time as possible with him. General care and management, daily health checks, training, exercising, and showing all take many hours of hard work. But if you ask other exhibitors, they will tell you it’s worth it!

As soon as you bring your pig home spend time with him every day so he gets to know you. When he is comfortable begin taking him out for daily walks to exercise and teach him to guide with a show stick. Learn how to **properly** use a show stick! Always stay calm when introducing your pig to new things. Handle him enough so you can touch him, this makes grooming and health care much easier! Grooming simply requires daily brushing and a bath about a week before the show. Be sure to check him daily for any signs of illness or injury.

Don’t wait until the day of a show to teach your pig to load! Teach him how to load and unload BEFORE you have to go somewhere!

Expect to spend time daily cleaning pens and feeders, and feeding and watering your pig. As you are around your pig, learn what his normal behaviors are so you will notice him acting differently sooner if he is sick.
HOW WILL I KEEP HIM HEALTHY?

Keeping your pig healthy begins before you bring him home. Find the nearest veterinarian that is willing to work with pigs (swine). This may be difficult and the nearest vet may be some distance away. Local producers can also be valuable resources but not all of them have accurate information. Ask around before taking advice from a producer. Once you make the decision to bring home a pig, let your vet know. You will want to develop a vaccination, de-worming, and parasite control protocol for your pig based on the area that you live in. Pigs are highly social animals and he may grow better and be more content if he has a companion. If possible, plan to bring home at least 2 pigs.

To prevent sickness or injury, as much as possible, you will be doing a lot of cleaning and planning ahead. Keep pens, feed pans, waterers, and trailers clean and free from sharp edges to reduce the chance of disease or injury. Follow the recommended vaccination and deworming protocol set up by you and your vet. Pay attention to bio-security measures, such as: isolating new animals, avoid wearing the same clothes (especially shoes) to different farms, use a foot bath with disinfectant at the entrance to your barn, and minimize the exposure of your pigs to people who have been around other pigs. During summer overheating and sunburn are a big concern. To prevent this you can spray them with cool water, create mud holes, PROVIDE SHADE, put up fans, and always make sure they have unlimited access to fresh drinking water!

Plan on spending lots of time with your pig. It is important to learn his normal behavior so you will notice him acting differently sooner if he is sick. Some common signs of sickness include: fever, not eating or drinking, diarrhea, chronic coughing or sneezing, trouble breathing, unexplained weight loss, excessive scratching, or sores on his skin. Call the vet for any major injury or unexplained behaviors. Your pig’s health and comfort should be your top priority! He is depending on you for ALL of his care!

WHAT WILL HE EAT?

This is a market animal. So his job is to eat and grow. Your job is to feed and exercise him properly. Exercise is important because you don’t want your pig to be too fat, you want him to build muscle. Feeding a balanced diet and getting him to eat as much of it as you can is important so he’ll grow and build muscle successfully.

Typically, the largest cost associated with raising a market animal is feed. You will feed your pig A LOT! As much as he will eat; and it needs to be a balanced diet. DO NOT PLAN ON FEEDING YOUR PIG TABLE SCRAPS!!

The first most essential nutrient is WATER. Determine what your pig’s water source will be, you’ll want to make sure he has unrestricted access to clean, fresh water! Plan for one waterer for up to 10 pigs in a pen or pasture.

Pigs need energy to grow and protein to build muscle. They also require specific vitamins and minerals. A commercial market hog feed will contain the required vitamins and minerals along with a good energy source and a high quality protein. As he grows his needs will change. Your job is to make sure you are feeding the correct ration to your pig based on his stage in life. Use the chart as a guide to determine if you are meeting his needs.

It would be best if he has access to feed 24/7. Because pigs can’t sweat they cool themselves by rooting in the dirt and mud and laying in the shade. So, during the hottest part of the day he may not be very hungry. Your pig might want to eat at night when it’s cooler. So if you keep feed in front of him at all times he can eat when it’s best for him. Make sure to refresh his feed and clean his feeders. Old or moldy feed can make your pig very sick!

On average, you’ll want your pig to eat about 5 lbs of feed per day. Some will eat more, some less. A typical market swine project lasts 4-5 months. You should expect him to eat at least 600 lbs of feed. This is just an average and you should aim for him to eat as much as you can get him to eat. Use your record book to track how much he eats.

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<th>Barrow Weight, lbs.</th>
<th>50-100</th>
<th>100-150</th>
<th>150-200</th>
<th>200+</th>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Gain, lbs.</td>
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<td>1.7-2.0</td>
<td>1.7-2.2</td>
<td>1.6-2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feed Intake, lbs.</td>
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<td>4.5-5.5</td>
<td>4.5-7</td>
<td>5-8</td>
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<td>Suggested Intake, lbs.</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
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<td>Protein, %</td>
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<td>15-18</td>
<td>13-16</td>
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