

SECTION 2: GETTING STARTED

2.1 WHY PIGS?

Okay, so you want to raise pigs. Now what?

Pigs are interesting and enjoyable animals, but they require work and a basic level of understanding their needs. **Before reading any further, you should ask yourself:**

“Why do I want pigs?”

There are common myths about raising pigs that may lead people to incorrectly believe pigs are simple and inexpensive to raise. It is important to have realistic expectations about raising pigs before investing in them.

Pigs can be raised for many reasons: commercial meat production, self-sustaining farming, niche markets or even companion animals. Whether you have intentions to start a business or simply want a pig as a companion animal, you should read through this manual first. The goal of this manual is to provide basic information to enhance your knowledge and help you manage expectations.

2.2 COMMON BREEDS

There are many different breeds of pigs. Depending on your goals, certain breeds may be more suitable than others. You should research the breed you are interested in prior to making any investment. Ask yourself a few basic questions related to your goals.

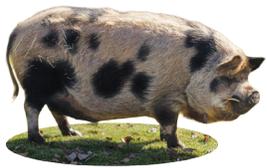
What are you looking for?

- Fast growth?
- High fat or marbled meat?
- Flavourful meat?
- High dressing percentage (proportion of total body weight that is meat)?
- A companion animal?

SECTION 2 | GETTING STARTED

2.2 COMMON BREEDS

Here are a few common heritage breeds seen in Canada:

BREED	QUALITIES	WEIGHT RANGE	COLOUR
Berkshire^(a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High fat content and marbling of meat. • Shorter snout. • Stocky legs and strong feet. 	Mature adults up to 270 kg	Black with white marks
Duroc^(a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good muscle growth. • Often used in commercial pork production. • Nice temperament. 	Mature adults up to 350 kg	Solid red or black
Hampshire^(a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast growth for outdoor production. • Good mothers. • Longer snout & longer legs. 	Mature adults Up to 300 kg	Black and white
Kunekune 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short snout. • True grazing pig. • Friendly – can be raised as companions. • High fat content and flavourful meat. 	50–150 kg	Multiple – often tricoloured
Landrace^(a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often used in commercial pork production. • Prolific sows. • Good mothers. • Floppy ears. 	Mature adults up to 400 kg	White
Large White^(b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often used in commercial pork production. • Prolific sows. • Good mothers. • Erect ears. 	Mature adults up to 400 kg	White

2.2 COMMON BREEDS

BREED	QUALITIES	WEIGHT RANGE	COLOUR
Mangalitsa^(b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curled thick hair. • High fat content and flavourful meat. • Smaller litters for size of sow. 	70–150 kg	Blonde, Swallow-bellied, red, curly hair
Meishan^(b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach sexual maturity at young age. • Prolific sows. • Docile temperament. • Floppy ears. 	60–160 kg	Black
Tamworth^(b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardy and good at grazing/foraging. • Docile temperament • Originally considered a “bacon pig”. • Slower growing. 	Mature adults up to 400 kg	Red
Vietnamese Pot Belly Pig^(b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often raised as companion animals. • Swayed back & smaller feet. • NOT all are “miniature” they can get very large! 	50–100 kg	Black, black with white marks
Yorkshire^(a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often used in commercial pork production. • Prolific sows. • Good mothers. • Erect ears. 	Mature adults up to 400 kg	White

Photos: a. National Pork Board. Pork Checkoff. Major Swine Breeds, 2020
 b. Dr. Kelsey Gray

2.3 UNDERSTANDING PRODUCTION GOALS

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Ensure your goals and expectations line up. Consider some common goals outlined below and review your own expectations. Defining your goals will help you achieve them and will help you make decisions about your farm.

GOAL	EXPECTATION
<p>To raise pigs for personal consumption, hobby, or sustainable farming. No intention of giving away or selling meat to anyone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are raising pigs for personal consumption, there are fewer restrictions on slaughtering and packaging meat. • This meat is for at home consumption only. • Sustainable farming that includes feeding food waste to pigs has strict laws and regulations that must be followed. (Section 5.2) • You must be registered with PigTRACE.
<p>To raise pigs with the intention to sell pork for commercial meat sales (registered shops, restaurants, grocery stores, or farmer's markets).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To sell pork locally, you must organize slaughtering, processing, and legal sale of products. (Section 10) • To sell pork nationally or internationally, pigs must be slaughtered at a federally inspected slaughter plant, and you must be registered with the Canadian Pork Excellence (CPE) national program (Section 1.3). • You must be registered with PigTRACE.
<p>To raise pigs with the intention to sell pork under speciality markets (e.g., organic pasture).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise pigs under a speciality program, you must contact specific organizations for certification (i.e., Certified Organic Association of B.C. - COABC).⁽³⁾ This may involve auditing and the fulfillment of specific requirements. • You must be registered with PigTRACE.
<p>To raise pigs as replacement breeding animals. Intending on selling them as breeding stock to another farmer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising breeding stock requires an understanding of genetics, healthy selection, breed specifics, reproduction, and knowledge of consumer demand. • Higher quality diets may be required. • Culling out poor quality genetics may be necessary. • You must be registered with PigTRACE.
<p>To raise pigs as pets or to house them in a sanctuary. Caring for them as companions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before purchasing a pig as a companion animal, you should check with your jurisdiction if you are legally allowed to possess a pig as a pet. • Research and ask specific questions to ensure you are getting what you want (not all "mini" pigs are miniature...). • Special veterinary care should be considered for older, injured, or rescued animals. • You must be registered with PigTRACE.

Source: Certified Organic Associations of B.C. (COABC), 2020⁽¹⁾

Section 3: Production Economics will go into the basic economics of raising pigs under different production scenarios.

Section 10: Marketing Hogs will go into the basic regulations regarding slaughtering and marketing pigs.

2.4 BUYING & SELLING PIGS

Local Sales

There are many ways that people can buy and sell pigs locally: online sales, auction marts, or on-farm sales or purchases. Whether this is the 1st or 100th time, before purchasing or selling a pig, you should do the following:

DO:

- **MANDATORY:** Have a valid B.C. Premises ID number, be registered with PigTRACE, and record all swine movements online within 7 days after movement (Section 1.2 PIGTRACE).
- Be prepared! Have an appropriate environment set up for pigs BEFORE bringing them in. (Section 4: HOUSING & MANAGEMENT)
- Discuss the health and vaccination status of incoming or outgoing animals with the buyer/seller and your veterinarian (**Don't bring disease in, don't send disease out!**).
- Ask questions to the buyer/seller. Make sure the pig you are buying/selling will meet the expected goals:
 - e.g., If you are buying a breeding sow, has she successfully been bred before?
 - e.g., If you are buying a pet pig, how big will it get?
 - e.g., If you are buying an animal to feed and grow, how big is it today?
- Have a plan on transporting the animal to or from the site.
- Make and keep your own records regarding pig movement, vaccination, treatment, and deworming, etc. (Section 2.5 RECORD-KEEPING).
- Monitor animal introductions carefully. Watch for any health issues (e.g., coughing), aggression, and overall adjustment to the new environment.
- A quarantine pen or barn is highly recommended for new animals. (Section 8.2 BIOSECURITY ON YOUR FARM).
- Report any details you can if you purchase from or sell to a site without a Premises ID number.

AVOID:

- Auction marts
 - These are HIGH traffic, high risk sites for disease movement. If you use an auction mart, talk to your veterinarian about risk reduction.
- Sharing animals
 - You do NOT want to spread disease. Sharing breeding animals is a good way to move disease back and forth.

2.4 BUYING & SELLING PIGS

- Purchasing from multiple sources
 - Sourcing new animals from multiple sources increases the likelihood of introducing new diseases. Single sourcing reduces your risk.

Importing/Exporting

Some producers look outside of Canada to buy pigs for genetic variation and others may find buyers outside of the country to sell to. Before making any international purchases or sales, you **MUST** consider government regulations and requirements.

Consider the following:

WHO needs to be contacted:

- Your veterinarian
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) office in your area

WHAT needs to be done:

- ALL country specific requirements need to be reviewed and completed. This can include but is not limited to veterinary surveillance and diagnostics, getting health certificates, organizing trucking routes, booking a veterinarian on the border, quarantining of animals, and understanding the associated costs.

WHERE this applies to:

- Different countries have different requirements.

WHEN should you start preparing:

- Organization of an import or export should be performed **AT LEAST 4 months** in advance of any desired purchase or sale date. Imports and exports take **TIME!**

WHY this matters:

- Canada is free of many devastating swine diseases and in order to maintain this health status internationally, we have specific requirements for allowing animals into the country. **EVERYONE** must play a role in keeping Canada's pork sector safe, including commercial and small lot producers.

Note: Importing animals is not a spur of the moment decision. You must understand that there are very specific regulations to import/export animals. Talk to your veterinarian and local CFIA officer before considering this route.

2.5 RECORD-KEEPING

Whether you have 5 pigs or 500 pigs, keeping records is a good management practice that everyone should do. Records can help you monitor farm performance, manage diseases, communicate with vets, and give you credibility with other producers whom you want to do business with.

Required Records:

- Swine movement declaration (Section 1.2 PigTRACE)

Recommended Records:

- Swine inventory records
- Swine treatment records
- Swine mortality records
- Swine reproductive records
- Swine feed records
- Swine sales and purchase records, including any imports and/or exports certification records
- Agricultural activities such as using outdoor composting piles, burying mortalities or solid/semi-solid waste, and water testing

Other Records:

- Swine diary – Write down things you are doing, questions you have, ideas, or observations. This is a great way to learn!
- Depending on the size of your farm, there are data-management software programs specific to swine management. Talk to your veterinarian or local swine nutritionist for more details.

Note: Farms registered with the CPE Program have different requirements for record-keeping. If you wish to become CPE certified, please see Section 1.3 NATIONAL INDUSTRY LED PROGRAM – CANADIAN PORK EXCELLENCE.

SECTION 2 REFERENCE LIST

1. Certified Organic Associations of B.C. (COABC) 2020