



SHOW SOLUTIONS

Showing Swine Selection

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It's time to find your new project for the upcoming show season. This is an exciting process for most, but there are a few things to consider before you begin:

- **Facilities:** It is critical to provide a warm, dry pen that offers plenty of ventilation. A locked-up, airtight barn creates the perfect setting for bacteria and sickness to multiply, so I encourage you to allow air to circulate throughout your facility. Relocating your new project will induce some stress, so ensuring that their surroundings are both comfortable and healthy will help the transition go more smoothly. If you live in a wet environment and find it hard to keep your facilities dry, try using Seco-Sorb underneath your source of bedding (i.e., shavings, mats, straw). This moisture-absorbing powder reduces the potential for growth of bacteria, mold and fungus.
- **Water and feed:** Without a doubt, the most important thing you can do is to make sure that your pig has easy and abundant access to fresh, clean water. Offering a feed pan or a hanging pan on the fence is also essential, but making sure it is clean is especially crucial. That green and black mold in the corners of feed pans and the floating detritus in water barrels and cup waterers is not healthy, so it should be removed. Again, relocation induces stress, so try to minimize this as much as possible by having feed on hand when you bring your new project home. Be sure to introduce any diet changes slowly. A gut health product, such as Show-Rite's Accent, can be a huge help when getting younger pigs started on feed, as it encourages an increase in appetite, stabilizes the stomach and aids in better nutrient absorption. Also, when you purchase your pig, be sure to ask the breeder or trader about prior vaccinations and de-worming so you can keep this information in your records. Work with your veterinarian to establish a regular de-worming program, and stay consistent with it over the duration of your project.
- **Purchasing:** Buying a project of the correct age and size is the first step to success. It is never fun to have to manage an animal that is way too big or not big enough to make weight at a target show. Next, consider buying from a breeder who knows his or her herd very well, as these breeders can offer the best suggestions about what type of project you should start with, whether it's a heavier-muscled pig

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or a well-balanced green one that will develop muscle later. Keep in mind that the one trait of the highest importance is structural correctness. It is critical to start out with sound a hog who is good on its feet and legs; flexibility, as well as feet and leg placement, are things that will never improve with age. Personally, when it comes to muscle, I like to start with a pig who expresses good muscle shape — but not so much that it looks round, tight and bunchy. Its feet and legs should be wide when you evaluate them from the front (chest view) and from behind (rear view), giving you an indication that its skeleton is pulled apart, as this will allow more muscle to develop and drape over that wide skeleton. However, it's important that the leg placement does not fall outside of the natural skeleton. Balance and profile should also be studied. For example, consider looking for a hog who is tall at the point of his or her shoulder and level in its topline, as these are positive traits.

To round out this advice, one final but crucial thing you should do for your project is to treat them like family and train them like athletes. If you have any questions about the products mentioned here, or about show pig nutrition in general, contact a member of the Show-Rite team.

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