

*Note: I am enrolled in a swine project and feeding two pigs this summer just like youth members and their projects.*

Title: What do my pigs need for feed?

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My goal is to feed my pigs so they look their very best (market ready) on show day. The desired weight is different for each pig and depends on my pigs frame size and degree of muscling and fat. Pigs need varying amounts of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals, and water. The amount depends on their genetics, stage of growth, and environment.

Selecting the right feed is important. Pig feed is typically corn and soybean meal plus a supplement. Carbohydrates give the pig energy and should make up the majority of the diet. Energy is needed for growth. Corn or barley is a great source of energy. Protein is also very important in feeds and soybean meal is a good source. However, corn and soybeans are limiting in certain amino acids (proteins are made up of amino acids). Make sure your feed contains the amino acids lysine, threonine, tryptophan and methionine. The amount of protein a pig needs depends on their weight. Pigs weighing 40-120 lbs need 18% protein while pigs over 120 lbs need 16% protein. Most commercial rations are balanced to give pigs what they need.



I need to evaluate my pigs. If my pigs are the type that grow quickly, are lean, and heavy muscled then they have a larger protein and mineral requirement than pigs that are slower growing, less efficient and fatter. Therefore, a pig that is above average for lean and muscle content may grow better if fed the higher protein ration all the way to market weight.

I am using a self feeder and will be hand feeding my pigs at certain times. Hand feeding is feeding a known amount of feed to each pig. Hand feeding is done when I am taming my pig and watching my pigs weight. This allows me and my pig to get to know each other better and at fair time to help me get my pig to its ideal weight. Typically a 50 lbs pig eats 3.2 lbs per day, 100 lbs pig eats 5.3 lbs per day, 150 lbs pig eats 6.8 lbs of feed, and 200 lbs pig eats approximately 7.5 lbs of feed per day.

If my pig needs to gain weight quickly, I will feed my pig more often (it will eat more feed if it is fed more often). I should not feed my market pig less than 5 pounds of feed each day. With my self-feeder, I need to check the feeder daily making sure there is feed present and that the feed is flowing to the bottom correctly.

Water is the most important essential nutrient required by animals. Water needs can vary due to outside temperature, diet, housing, and stresses. If not enough water is available then muscle mass and muscle definition will be affected. This is why it is so important to make sure the water is fresh and cool for my pigs.

When I get my pigs, at the end of the month, I will make sure they have plenty of feed, water, and straw but I will leave them alone for a few days so they will get use to their new home. I don't want to over stress them by walking or taming them the first week.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself.

- What is your goal with your swine project?
- What kind of feed do you have?
- Is the available water cool to the touch?
- Are you ready to bring your pig home?

