



Swine Fact Sheet

Animal Sciences

Auburn University



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Producing Pork on a Small Scale

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There is a growing demand for information concerning small-scale pork production. Small, diversified farm owners, weekend farmers and youth are showing interest in alternatives to the large confinement facilities that dominate "modern" production.

Why would anyone want to raise hogs? Some may gain a sense of responsibility and accomplishment from farrowing a sow and raising the pigs to market. Others may simply enjoy observing this intelligent creature and like to keep a hog or two around. A growing number of farmers want to produce a highly nutritious, tasty pork product for their own use or for a specialty market.

With a minimum of investment in facilities, a you can market labor, management, land value, homegrown grains and forages and other assets in the form of market hogs (or feeder pigs). The downfall of many small swine operations has been in trying to substitute borrowed capital for some of these assets. Another is the dependence on a traditional market rather than specialty or niche markets.

Just as with any farming enterprise, the small hog operation must be based on sound economic principles. Budgets, cash flows and markets must guide the establishment or expansion of any hog operation. Realistic price estimates and costs of production are critical when you wager your farm and all your belongings on the hog business.

To be successful, small pork producers must work and think harder than the established, larger operator. Their competitive edge lies in lower fixed costs, the will to find a more economical way of raising hogs and the will to market the final product they are proud of. They must remember to spend a dollar only when it will return more than a dollar in income. Small producers must stick to the basics of pork production.

This fact sheet is the first in a series concentrating on production practices for small-scale pork producers. For more information, contact your local county Extension office, or call (334)844-1505.

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