

# Raising Your Own Pork

LPM-00346

With higher meat prices there is more interest in home raising pigs for pork. One pig for a small family of three to four (two pigs for larger families) should take care of most of your pork needs. A freezer is a must.

In Alaska, persons wishing to produce their own pork at home should buy feeder pigs (40 lbs.) in the spring and feed them out to market weight during the warmer summer months. Advantages include:

1. Minimum housing requirements - A calf-hutch type structure is ideal for two to three pigs
2. Supplying feed and water is much easier and requires less labor
3. Fairly rapid turnover - four to five months
4. Lice are less of a problem outdoors
5. Can be used as 4-H and FFA project animals

## What Size Pig Should You Buy?

There are many different breeds of pigs available in Alaska. All with good breeding will produce high quality pork for home use. Most commercial producers prefer a three or four way cross in their breeding program.

Weaner pigs that weigh around 40 pounds are considered ideal for home pork production. You can expect to pay \$50 to \$75 for pigs in this weight range.

Male feeder pigs should be castrated. This way, male and female pigs can be mixed without undesired results. Even if you are not planning to mix male and female pigs, this forethought may prove beneficial for future operations.

## How Much Feed Is Required?

This is one of the first questions you need to answer before buying the pigs.

It will take about 3 ½ pounds of feed to make 1 pound of gain. If you buy a 40 pound pig and feed it to an average market weight of 210 pounds, you put on 170 pounds of gain. 170 pounds of gain X 3.5 pounds of feed = 595 pounds of feed per pig.

It is recommended that pre-mixed commercial feed be used for home pork production. Although that is somewhat more expensive, you do receive a balanced ration that has all the ingredients needed for a growing pig. There has been much discussion among farmers and industry representatives concerning the feeding of fish and crab meal to swine. Research conducted at the Alaska Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station shows that marine byproducts can be fed to swine, but there are limitations. People wishing to mix their own feed should contact their local Extension Agent for further information.

## Equipment Needed

1. Waterer - Rubber buckets in an old tire work well.
2. Self Feeder - Although these are rather expensive (\$75 to \$100), they will probably pay for themselves if you are feeding 3 to 4 pigs, due to reduced feed waste.
3. Plywood calf-hutch type housing plus a fenced-in area for exercise - the fence should be woven wire with a board around the bottom of the inside for reinforcement. Pigs will sometimes root holes under fences and these must be repaired before the pigs get free. You need 60 square feet of space per pig.



## Raising Your Own Pork – Will It Pay?

Item	Average Cost	Your Cost
40# Weaner Pig	60.00	_____
Interest for 4 months @ 10%	2.00	_____
600# Feed @ \$24.00/100	144.00	_____
Wormer + Parasite Control	2.00	_____
Bedding (straw/hay)	12.00	_____
Housing & Fencing		
\$135 cost ÷ 5 years use ÷ 3 pigs per year	8.67	_____
Waterer & Feeders		
\$68 ÷ 5 years use \$13.60/year ÷ 3 pigs	4.53	_____
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>233.20</b>	

\*NOTE - These costs do not include charges for labor, risk, management, etc.

**Did It Pay?** Remember, a pig is not all pork chops and ham!

Example A: A 210# hog with head, leaf fat, and kidneys attached will dress approximately 74% for 155 pounds of meat.

Example B: A 210# hog with head, kidneys, and leaf fat removed will dress out approximately 70% for 147 pounds of meat.

From the 147 pounds of unprocessed carcass you can expect to get approximately 135 pounds of retail cuts.

In Example A, the production cost is \$1.50/lb. For Example B, the production cost is \$1.59/lb. These costs do not include charges for processing meat. Those costs in the Palmer region are: killing fee - \$27.50; cutting and wrapping (including quick freezing) cost 30 to 35¢/lb.

Another potential source of income is the manure produced. A pig confined to a 60 sq ft pen will produce approximately 1.2 tons of manure in 5 months. This is equal to 120# of 10-7-9 fertilizer worth approximately \$17.00

For more information on this topic contact: Milan Shipka, Livestock  
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