



# Tips for Beginning a Livestock Project: Market Hogs

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## Introduction

The 4-H junior livestock program develops life skills in thousands of youth across Utah. Youth gain confidence and responsibility as they feed and care for quality animals in preparation for exhibition and marketing of their project. Unfortunately for some youth, raising livestock becomes a disappointing experience when their project is sifted for being too light, performs poorly, or is discounted by the judge. All too often an exhibitor unknowingly

makes a wrong decision(s). Perhaps, at the beginning of the project, a youth selects too small of an animal which physically cannot gain the required pounds for entry into the show, or the youth chooses to feed a cheaper, nutritionally imbalanced feed. Through simple planning and following a few basic tips, a potential negative experience could turn into a positive life changing experience and build the 4-H livestock program across Utah. In general, a pig that is 5 ½ to 6 months old and weighs about 275 lbs is the ideal market hog.

Days Before Show (approximate)	120	90	60	30	0
Weight	60-100 lbs	90-140 lbs	140-190 lbs	190-240 lbs	240 -290 lbs
Expected Gain	1-1.25 lbs/day	1.25-1.5 lbs/day	1.5 – 2.0 lbs/day	1.5 – 2.0 lbs/day	-
Quality of Feed (CP%)	20-22%	18%	18%	18%	-

## Factors Causing Poor Weight Gains in Swine Projects

**Exposure to the elements.** The optimum temperature for swine projects is 60 to 70 F° 12 inches from the pen's floor. Hogs need a dry place to sleep and protection from cold weather. This can be achieved by providing straw for the pig to lay on.

Young pigs are raised in temperature controlled conditions. When hogs are brought home, they are exposed to greater extremes in environmental conditions, with 30 to 40 degree temperature swings from nighttime to daytime. The less stressful the

transition to its new home the better the hog will gain throughout the duration of its stay.

**Feed that is not nutritionally balanced for proteins and amino acids (particularly Lysine).** Protein is needed for the development of bone and muscle. Protein is made from amino acids provided in the feed. If the protein level in the feed is low or has imbalanced amino acids, the hog will grow poorly and develop shallow muscle. Pig feed should contain the essential amino acids: lysine, threonine, tryptophan and methionine. Feed should also contain vitamin B and iron which are extremely important to productive hogs.

***Inconsistent feeding or watering.*** Throughout the growth feeding phase, hogs should have free access to feed and water. The simplest method of feeding is with a self-feeder and a water with a nipple attached. The transition to a higher feed ration should take approximately 5 to 7 days. Sudden feed changes can cause the hog to go off feed.

***Diseases and illness.*** Worm hogs once a month or as necessary. Internal parasites are usually not visible, but external parasites can be seen with the naked eye with close observance and attention to detail. When treatment or injections are necessary for animal health, read the label, administer properly, adhere to withdrawal times, give injections in the neck region and keep accurate records.

***Water.*** Provide clean water at all times. If using a nipple for watering, be sure to check it for clogs daily. Water is essential for good health and muscle development (muscle is 75% water). Never withhold water from a pig to limit weight gain. Hogs cannot sweat; therefore it is important to provide them with adequate water and shade to prevent heat stress.



## References

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