Providing proper nutrition to your market hog is very important for that hog to reach its full potential at the market hog show. Making sure that the hog receives appropriate protein, energy, and minerals allows the hog to not only grow to reach market weight, but also ensures that the hog develops muscle and reaches an appropriate fat cover for show day. Proper nutrition starts by selecting appropriate concentrates for your hog and providing good-quality water daily. Unlike other species of livestock, hogs only have one stomach and therefore are not able to digest fibrous feeds such as hay very well.

**Complete Feeds**

Market hogs should be fed a complete feed made primarily from concentrates, or in other words, grains. This complete feed is formulated to meet the pig’s nutritional requirements for protein, energy, lysine (an amino acid), plus vitamins and minerals. Nutritional requirements change as the pig grows, and so the complete feeds change, also. For example, the nutritional requirement for protein ranges from 10–18% protein, depending on the weight of the animal.

The complete feed should be fed free choice during the starter and grower phases. This means the pig is allowed to eat as much as it wants. This can change during the finishing phase to adjust their growth rate, also known as average daily gain. To increase feed intake, and thus average daily weight gain, pigs may be fed 4–6 meals a day. The pig should clean up all the feed well before the next feeding. To decrease average daily gain, pigs may be fed a limited amount twice a day. The table on the next page lists the **minimum** amount of feed a pig should consume daily based on body weight. You should never feed less than this amount per day!

**Lysine**

Lysine is an amino acid that is added to swine diets for muscle development and growth. Pigs that don’t receive enough lysine will grow more slowly and develop more fat than pigs receiving adequate amounts of lysine in their diets. Lysine levels range from 0.67–1.32% depending on the growth stage. According to the National Research Council: *Nutrient Recommendations for Swine, 2012*, pigs weighing 25–56 lb. require 1.32% lysine.
in their diet, pigs weighing 56–168 lb. require 1.07% lysine, pigs weighing 168–224 lb. require 0.80%, and pigs weighing 224–302 lb. require 0.67% lysine.

**Water**

Always provide clean, fresh water and allow pigs to drink as much as they want. Be sure to scrub water containers at least weekly to encourage water consumption. Poor-quality water or not enough water can affect feed intake. Reduced feed intake will in turn affect animal growth rate. Most show pigs are watered using a tube with a nipple. The tube is filled with water and the pig drinks from the nipple.

**Transitioning to Different Feed Types**

Because nutritional requirements change as animals grow, pigs will need to transition through several different feed types from weaning until finishing. Pigs should be started on a starter ration, a feed formulated for pigs that weigh 25–100 lb. Once the pig reaches 100 lb., it should be gradually transitioned to a grower feed until it reaches 200 lb. At 200 lb. the pig should then be transitioned to a finisher feed.

To transition from one type of feed to the next, begin mixing the new feed into the old feed. For the first few days, the feed should consist of ¼ of the new feed and ¾ of the old feed. After a few days, you can move to ½ of each feed for several days, then to ¼ new feed with ¾ old feed, and finally move to only feeding the new feed. This prevents digestive upsets so that pigs don’t decrease the amount of feed they consume each day.

**How Much Do I Feed?**

Generally, market hogs should be allowed to consume as much feed as they want until they reach 180–200 lb. At this weight you can assess if the pig will reach a target weight by the weigh-in date at the fair. Adjustments can then be made to either increase or decrease daily weight gain. Table 1 lists the minimum amount of feed a pig should eat to maintain body weight. As mentioned before, never feed less than this minimum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Weight Range, lb.</th>
<th>Amount of feed per day, lb.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25–56</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56–168</td>
<td>3.5–5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168–224</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224–302</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information on feeding market hogs, contact your local 4-H educator or a livestock educator.

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Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Where trade names appear, no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences is implied.

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Code EE0892 10/23pod