

Nevada

Swine (*Sus scrofa*)



Vocabulary

Boar	Male, any age, used for breeding, 500-700 pounds
Sow	Female that has had a litter of pigs, 300-600 pounds
Gilt	Female before she has given birth (usually 18 months and less)
Barrow	A neutered male
Piglet	A nursing pig (less than 3-4 weeks)

Lifecycle

Gestation (from conception to birth) is 3 months 3 weeks and 3 days, or 114 days. A sow will give birth, called **farrowing**, to 6 to 14 piglets (average 10). Piglets weigh between one and three pounds at birth. They have teeth, their eyes are open and they can walk. A few moments after birth, a piglet will select a teat and it will always return to that teat during feeding. Some of the bigger piglets will have two teats of their own! The **runt** is the smallest piglet in the **litter** and usually gets stuck with a teat that doesn't produce much milk. If the litter is very large, these piglets cannot compete with their siblings. Many farmers will take these piglets from the litter and hand feed them. If the runt survives, within 3 to 4 weeks it is as big and healthy as its brothers and sisters. A piglet will grow up to be market weight (250 pounds) in just 6 months. Gilt that are born from good sows will be kept in the **herd** for **breeding**.

What Pigs Eat

Pigs are **omnivores**, like people, which makes them ideal for recycling our leftovers. They have a digestive system that is more like humans' than any other farm animal. Historically, many farms raised at least one pig to feed grain byproducts and food scraps. Today, many pigs are fed corn and soybean meal, as well as recycled food waste that has been cooked in large vats.

Swine in Nevada

The number of hogs raised in Nevada is low because grain production is limited. Most pigs are raised in regions where the grain is produced. Iowa is the leading state in hog production. Some hogs are produced for local markets throughout Nevada. According to the 1997 Nevada Agriculture Statistics Service, our state had a total of 113 hog farms, with an inventory of 7,400 hogs. The largest commercial hog operation is R.C. Farms, Inc., located in North Las Vegas. R.C. Farms has a standing inventory of 5,000 hogs and feeds them primarily recycled food waste from local restaurants, food supply and food preparation businesses.

Other Interesting Pig Facts

- Pigs are the smartest farm animals. In fact, researchers believe they are one of the smartest animals on earth, just behind primates and dolphins!
- Contrary to a popular myth, pigs are clean! They have no sweat glands so they need mud or water to keep cool. The mud is also a sunscreen to prevent sunburn.
- A sow grunts a variety of different sounds while feeding her piglets. Because her milk supply lasts only 15-20 seconds per feeding, she must cue her piglets to pay attention and suckle when it is feeding time.
- The saying "living high on the hog" originated among army enlisted men that received shoulder and leg cuts while officers received the top loin cuts.
- The heaviest hog ever recorded was a Poland China hog named Big Bill. He weighted 2,552 pounds and measured 9 feet long with a belly that dragged on the ground.
- Pork is the most widely eaten meat around the world. China produces and consumes the most.

Products

Pork: bacon, ham, sausage, hot dogs, pork chops, loins, roasts, lard, pork rinds, etc.
In the U.S., 45 pounds of pork is eaten per person per year.

By-products

Pharmaceutical: almost 40 by-products, including cortisone, epinephrine, insulin, estrogens, progesterone and blood fibrin, and other health aids like porcine burn dressings.

Industrial Products that use pork by-products: anti-freeze, cellophane, cement, chalk, insulation, linoleum, matches, nitroglycerin, plastics, and more.

Other: glue, shoes, footballs, buttons, bone china, porcelain enamel, water filters, brushes, insulation.

Suggested Activities

- Have students calculate how much weight a pig gains per day to increase from birth weight to market weight in 6 months. Have students chart their weight and compare.
- Celebrate National Pig Day, March 1st : Cook bacon or sausage; wear pink; make pig masks or puppets. This is during National Reading Week, so read pig stories.
- Have the kids make a pig-shaped book. Have students illustrate or write what we get from pigs, or list facts they learned about pigs.

Suggested Literature

Grades K-2

See How They Grow, Mary Lang
The Piggy in the Puddle, Charlotte Pomerantz

Grades 3-4

All Pigs Are Beautiful, Dick King-Smith
Pigs, Gail Gibbons
The Littlest Pig, Erica Frost
Pigs Might Fly, Dick King-Smith
Pigs, Robert Munsch
A Pig Tale, Olivia Newton-John
The Three Pigs, David Wisner
Life on a Pig Farm, Judy Wolfman

Grade 5

This Little Pig, Jeanette Oke
Charlotte's Web, E.B. White

Suggested Web Sites

General

www.pork4kids.com
www.ansi.okstate.edu

High School

www.porkscience.org

More Resources

Where Pork Comes From? Teaching kit with video, Indiana Farm Bureau, \$25, (317) 692-7830

National Pork Producers Association Resources for multiple grades, (800) 456-7675

Pig Panorama Teacher's Guide for intermediate grade levels. Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom, \$1.50, (800) 546-3496

"The Pig-Pork Story" 16 page booklet on pigs, how they are raised and their many uses, 5 cents each. Illinois Pork Women Association, 6411 S 6th St, Frontage Rd East, Springfield, IL 62707. (217) 529-3100

"Hog By-Product Math" One-age worksheet for grades 3-6 with math and decoding problems, 3 cents each. Illinois Pork Women Association, 6411 S 6th St, Frontage Rd East, Springfield, IL 62707. (217) 529-3100

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