Livestock Judging Guide

By
Neal Smith
Extension Area Specialist – 4-H
Module 5: Swine

Judging Market Hogs
Judging Market Hogs

Ideal market barrow:
- Weighs approx. 220 to 250 lbs.
- Will meet meat-type hog certification standards
  - Minimum of 29.75 inches long
  - Less than 1.0 inches of last rib fat depth
  - Greater than 4.75 square inches of loin eye area
- Clean down the topline
- Abundance of muscling in ham and loin region
Ideal Market Hog

- High tail setting
- Muscular stifle
- Correct set of hocks
- Full & deep through center & lower portion of ham
- Legs set wide apart
- Naturally thick muscular loin
- Long, level rump
- Deep ribbed
- Long bodied
- Clean turn to top
- Cushion to pastern
- Firm at base of ham
- Heavy, rugged bone
- Deep, wide chest floor
- Naturally thick muscular loin
- Smooth, clean shoulder
- Long bodied
- Trim jowl
- Correct set of knee
- Strong, bold head & ear

Legs set wide apart
Steps to Judging Swine

- First view from the ground and work up
- Next evaluate from rear to front
- Rank class on traits of importance
- Evaluate most important traits first
- Eliminate easy placings
- Place the remainder based on the volume of important traits
Judging Market Hogs

Ranking of Traits for Market Hogs
- Degree of muscling
- Growth
- Capacity or volume
- Degree of leanness
- Structure and soundness
Evaluating Degree of Muscling

Indicators of degree of muscling:
- First - thickness through center of ham
- Second - width at the ground between feet (standing & walking)
  - Base width and width of pigs top should be equal
  - Red flag – Top width exceeding base width indicates fat
Judging Market Hogs

Narrow Width

Good Width
Judging Market Hogs

Evaluating Degree of Muscling

Indicators of degree of muscling:

- Third - shape over the top (or loin)
  - Muscular top should be “butterfly” shape
  - Indicates leanness
- Loins on both sides of backbone extending higher than center
  - “Flat” top indicates fat
Judging Market Hogs

Evaluating Growth

- Hogs are sold by the pound
- Important that pigs have good growth rate
- Pigs should reach market weight at an early age
- Assume all animals in a class are the same age
- Heaviest pig is the fastest growing
- Lightest pig is the slowest growing
Judging Market Hogs

- Evaluating Capacity or Volume
  - Hogs with good capacity or volume will be able:
    - To consume feed necessary for growth
    - To perform well in terms of reproduction
  - Capacity or volume is determined by:
    - Body width
    - Body depth
    - Body length
    - Balance (how well these three factors fit together)
Judging Market Hogs

Width:

- Best evaluated starting at the ground and working up
- Pigs with good width will:
  - Walk and stand wide both in front and rear
  - Have good width through the chest
- Top width (top 1/3) and base width (lower 1/3) should be equal
- Middle 1/3 of the animal should be the widest
Judging Market Hogs

Too Narrow
Narrow tracking at the walk

Good Width
Good chest width equates to good capacity or volume

Good Width
Wide based in the standing position
Judging Market Hogs

Depth of Body:
- Important for capacity for feeding and reproduction
- Should be uniform from fore flank to rear flank
- Be careful –
  - Excessively deep appearing hog could indicate a fat problem
- Lack of depth, or shallow body, will:
  - Take away from overall balance
  - Hurt pig’s placing due to lack of a production look
Judging Market Hogs

Lacks Adequate Depth

Unbalanced

Uniform Body Depth

Shallow in the rear flank

Too deep in rear flank

Beginning to show excessive body depth due to fat
Judging Market Hogs

Length of Body
- Increased importance due to heavier market weights
- Measured visually from flank to flank
- Hogs typical growth curve:
  - Grows frame > Deposits muscle > Deposits fat
- Longer bodied & bigger framed hogs mature later
- Later maturity delays fat being deposited
- Higher weights before fat deposited
  - 260 lbs. versus 220 lbs.
Judging Market Hogs

Short Body Length

Good Body Length
Judging Market Hogs

Evaluating Degree of Leanness

Degree of leanness is influenced by:
- Degree of muscling
- Frame size
- Sex of animal
- Age
- Weight
Judging Market Hogs

- Clean over loin
- Clean over shoulder
- Clean & firm in flanks
- Well defined ham-loin junction
- Clean & firm in crotch
Judging Market Hogs

Evaluating Degree of Leanness

- Evaluate leanness only after degree of muscling is determined
- Heavy muscled hogs will be lean
- Light muscled hogs will be fat
- Gilts mature at a later age (or heavier weight) than barrows
- At same age or weight, gilts will be leaner than barrows
Evaluating Degree of Leanness

- Fat will be deposited from:
  - Front to rear
  - First in cheeks and jowl
  - Then behind and over shoulders
  - Then in the flanks
  - Finally around tailhead

Evaluate leanness by looking:

- For indentions over & behind shoulders
- At ham-loin junction
- For presence of a dimple just in front of tailhead
Judging Market Hogs

Too Fat

Notice pig is wider over the top than at the base

Too fat
Judging Market Hogs

Extremely Lean

- Smooth, tight jowl and underline, indentation at ham-loin junction, dimple above tailhead

Lean Market Barrow

- Clean and firm in flanks, well defined ham-loin junction, clean & trim in crotch
Judging Market Hogs

- Evaluating Structure & Soundness
  - Best viewed beginning at the ground and working upward
  - Give attention to:
    - Feet & pasterns
    - Hocks
    - Knees
    - Rump
    - Shoulders
Judging Market Hogs

Feet & Pasterns

Feet
- Big, with even toes
- Squarely set forward

Pasterns
- Set at 45 degree angle to ground
- Maximum cushion & flexibility

Good feet, squarely set & pasterns with correct angle
Judging Market Hogs

Poor Structure

Dewclaws touching the ground, too much set to pasterns

Poor Structure

Feet turned outward, restricts flexibility, additional joint stress
Judging Market Hogs

- Hocks should be constructed of:
  - Flat, clean bone
  - Approximately 20 degrees of set

Correct set and curvature to the hocks
Judging Market Hogs

Post-legged

Hocks too straight, round bone design, lacks flexibility

Unsoundness

Swollen or “puffy joints from hocks being too straight
Judging Market Hogs

Knees should:
- Be straight or slightly set backward
- Provide cushion & flex to front end

Correct set to the knees.
Note the slight backward set or curvature.
Judging Market Hogs

Calf-kneed

Knees have too much set or curvature

Buck-kneed

Inadequate length between the foot and knee
Judging Market Hogs

- Rump structure should be:
  - Average or above average in length
  - Level to slightly sloping from front to back

- This type rump allows for:
  - Maximum power & strength
  - Additional flexibility
  - Good length of stride
Rumps too short & steep restrict movement and cause extra stress on other joints.
Judging Market Hogs

- Shoulders should have:
  - Adequate set to allow front leg to extend at a correct angle
  - Shoulder set is directly related to length of stride

Correct slope and set to the shoulder
Judging Market Hogs

Shoulder too straight
Gives appearance of shoulder being forced forward into the neck, resulting in short strides off front end

Extremely straight
Severely limits flexibility through front end, puts tremendous pressure on the knee and pastern joints
Test Your Skills

Place this class of market hogs.
Official Placing

Official Placing: 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
Cuts: 2 - 4 - 6