



IN THE CLASSROOM

How Much Should I Feed My Pig?

By Josh Brockman, Brockman Farms

1. What makes up a 'balanced' feed ration?

One of the most frequent questions I'm asked from new feeders, and even a lot of experienced feeders is, "How much should my pig be eating?" And for good reason. The two most important parts of your pigs' nutrition is the proper type and amount of feed and a fresh, clean water source. Knowing how to use supplements for added fat, muscle, body, joint protection, etc. are all very valuable tools, however making sure your pig has a healthy digestive system and is consuming their basic feed ration and daily water intake will get you a long way down the road to success.

First off, let's talk about the setup and routine you should have for feeding your pig. From day one, I feel it's best suited to "hand feed" versus using a self feeder. This allows you lots of advantages:

1. You can monitor the amount of feed your pig is eating and know exactly the amount they are consuming;
2. Your pig will actually receive more total nutrients out of eating in one setting (approx. 10-20 min) versus eating small portions throughout the entire day, like they traditionally do on a self feeder;
3. In the end, we need show barrows/gilts to consume the amount of feed we desire at a show when we want them to, so doing this process at home only helps train them to eat when feed is put in the feeder. In essence, it becomes a habit for them, and natural.

I recommend feeding twice a day, once in the morning, and once in the evening, and as close to 12 hours apart as you can get. For example, an ideal time would be 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. each day. Another very important part of this is to remember, your training your pig for a schedule, and just like you get hungry around lunch time, they will begin to be hungry at each feeding time, so it's very imperative to feed close to the same time everyday.

What is the right amount of feed to start my pig on?

The right amount of total feed to provide will change throughout the season and is dependent on factors such as appetite, size, and the physical traits and weight you're targeting. You normally are receiving pigs at approximately 6-8 weeks of age, so a big portion of questions I get are "How much feed do I need to start them on?" In this stage of their life, pigs are maturing and growing in many areas much as a young child, so at this point I want them consuming basically all they want to eat, as if they were on a self feeder, however being trained to eat in two settings. This way I can also monitor how they are eating and the amount they are consuming daily.

I always start pigs out on 1 lb. of feed per feeding for about the first 3-5 days you have them in the barn. I always do a minimum of three days because that also gives them time to adjust to a new environment, have relief from the stress of travel and give you a true evaluation of their appetite. (I also suggest using Vita Charge® paste or Vita Charge Liquid Boost for those first three days to aide with the stress of this transition).

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After they have settled in...

As we discussed earlier, digestive health, general feed and fresh water are the most important factors to me when feeding. After 5-7 days in the barn is when I begin to introduce Sure Champ® or Sure Champ Spark to assist in gut health and aide in consumption and digestion. If your animal's digestive system isn't functioning properly they won't be able to fully utilize their ration or supplements, and you run the risk of sickness because of lower immunity.

At this point in the feeding phrase I also begin adjust the feed amount $\frac{1}{4}$ lb +/- according to how they are eating. So if they are cleaning up their feed and hungry at feeding time then you would increase. If they are leaving feed you would decrease. Remember we want them eating all they want, but also cleaning it up each feeding. I then repeat this process every 3-5 days over the next few weeks. If you increase, but they don't clean it all up go back to the amount you were at previously, and go another 3-5 days before trying to increase again. I'll use this process generally until I get to 1.5- 2 lbs. of total feed per feeding. (Note that this is general outline on feed AMOUNTS. The type of feed you feed during this period may still need to be adjusted based on your pigs needs).

What's next for the growing period?

From this point your amount adjustments are dependent on many factors and when you need to begin targeting a feed plan based on your pigs type, muscle, body condition, weight, and the direction you need to focus on in these areas. Some pigs need to be continued on increases up to 2.5-3 lbs. per feeding to continue to meet their maturity needs, where others need to maintain or "coast", and some need to be managed at this point for weight/skeletal reasons. At this point I alter my adjustment time from 3-5 days to weekly. Remember when you change feed, that you won't see a difference in just a day or two, so give them ample time to respond to a feed change before you decide you need to change again.

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