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IN THE CLASSROOM

Livestock Nutrition 101: Pigs Ben Bobell, Bobell Farms - Lincoln, Ill.

What are the most important nutrients in a show pig ration?

Protein and Lysine are the building blocks for muscle development and skeletal growth. Fat is necessary for calories and overall growth and fleshing, and vitamins and minerals are needed for basic development of the pig.

How does an exhibitor know what show feed or ration to use?

There are a lot of good show feed companies out there with nutritionists that build very good diets. The key is to find a source where you can purchase show feed. It is also important to find a company that provides education on how to feed your animals, and that has a purebred or industry leader that uses that company's products that you can reach out to that will answer any questions you have.

Why is water important?

Water is the most important nutrient in any animal's diet. And, for pigs it is very important to help keep them cool since pigs don't sweat. The only ways to keep a pig cool is from the inside-out and from the outside-in.

Why would I slop (feed wet) my pig instead of giving it dry feed?

There are two basic reasons you would wet feed. I believe when you wet feed, you get increased consumption. And secondly, when you start to feed supplements, it is a very good way to keep those supplements in the diet so the pigs don't pick through them.

How much feed should my pig get each day?

The amount of feed you give your pig each feeding is going to be based on weight, age and maturity. The best way to determine that is to teach your pigs to eat twice a day and clean up all their feed in 20 minutes or less. Then, base their feed intake on body condition, maturity as well as growth rate. If you are still unsure about the amount per feeding, check with the breeder who you bought your pigs from or the feed representative at the show feed company where you buy your feed. Each pig grows and changes so quickly it is hard to say a specific amount per pig, per day.

What kind of supplements are important to my pig's performance?

We can put supplements into different categories. There are fat supplements that add condition and flesh. There are Paylean[®] products that will increase muscle and leanness. There are fiber and filler supplements that also help promote body and rib shape. There are digestive health supplements that promote appetite and intake. These would include Vita Charge[®] Paste, Vita Charge[®] Liquid Boost[®] and Sure Champ[®] Spark. And the fifth category is a supplement for hoof and joint care.

How often should I feed my pig?

You should give your pig two equal feedings twice a day – generally 12 hours apart. As mentioned above, train them to finish their feed in 20 minutes or less. Dump any feed they don't eat.

How does the environment factor in to my pig's nutritional needs?

The environment plays a dramatic role in feeding pigs. If you are feeding in the winter, those pigs will require more nutrients and more energy. In the summer when it's really hot, you need to be careful not to push them too hard with high energy feeds. Sure Champ[®] Extreme with Climate Control can help combat the effects of heat stress when temperature consistently stay above 70 degrees. So yes, environment can have a significant impact on feeding pigs.

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