

# Fun Facts About Pork!



*Kailey's Pig 'Tales'* (Pre-3rd) was written to educate youth about the pork industry. This guide provides facts, definitions, information, frequently asked questions about the pork industry and additional websites for teachers to utilize in their classrooms.

## Did you know?

- ✓ Pork is the most widely eaten meat in the world.
- ✓ Salt pork was a key staple food for Washington's troops at Valley Forge in the winter of 1776 to 1777.
- ✓ A pig's squeal can range from 110-115 decibels, a Concorde jet is usually under 112 decibels.
- ✓ Insulin and about 40 other medicines are made from pigs.
- ✓ Pigs are smart! They can learn to push a lever in the barnyard to get a drink of water or a dish of food. Over the years pigs have been taught to tumble, race, pull carts, dance and hunt.
- ✓ In Kansas there are close to 1,500 hog farms, more than 99% of which are family owned.

# Pork Glossary

**Barrow** - a male pig that is not used for breeding

**Bear** - a male used for breeding

**Farrow** - means to give birth to piglets

**Gilt** - a female pig that has not given birth

**Hog** - a mature swine

**Litter** - means a group of piglets born at the same time. Litter sizes are usually between 8-12 piglets

**Mammals** - an animal (including humans) that breathes air, has a backbone and grows hair at some point during its life. Female mammals have glands that can produce milk

**Pig** - a young swine

**Piglet** - a baby pig

**Pork** - meat from a pig or hog

**Pork Producer** - a farmer that provides you a safe, healthy product to eat

**Protein** - essential to all animal life processes and supplied by various foods such as meat, milk, eggs, nuts and beans

**Sow** - a female pig used for breeding. Pigs are pregnant for three months, three weeks and three days

**Snout** - a nose that sticks out

**Swine** - refers to animals in the pig family

**Wean** - means the piglet is big enough to eat on his own and doesn't nurse from the sow anymore

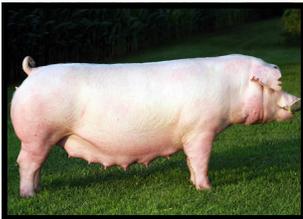


# Breeds

There are many different breeds of pigs. The main types in the United States are Berkshire, Chester White, Duroc, Hampshire, Landrace, Poland China, Spotted Pig and Yorkshire.



**Berkshire** - Originating in Britain in the mid-1500's, the Berkshire is a black pig that can have white on the legs, ears, tail and face. The Berkshire is prized for its juiciness, flavor and tenderness. It yields a pink-hued, heavily marbled meat whose high fat content is suitable for long cooking times and high-temperature cooking.



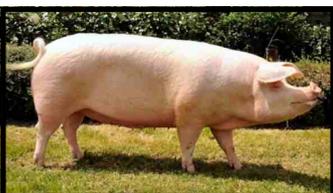
**Chester White** - The Chester White originated in Chester County, PA in the early 1800's when strains of large, white pigs common to the Northeast United States were bred with a white boar imported from Bedfordshire, England. Today, the Chester White is actively used in commercial crossbreeding operations.



**Duroc** - Duroc is the second most recorded breed in the United States. With red or black coloring and droopy ears, the Duroc is known for quick growth and maturity, deep body, broad ham and shoulder and a quiet disposition. Durocs are known for sweet meat, marbling, amazing shoulders and spareribs.



**Hampshire** - The Hampshire is possibly the oldest, early-American hog breed in existence today. Throughout the years, the Hampshire has become one of the most popular pigs in America. They are black with a white belt across the shoulders that covers the front legs and around the body. They are heavily muscled, lean meat breed and is the fourth most recorded breed of pig in the United States.



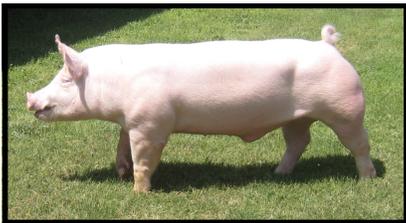
**Landrace** - Landrace are white with ears that droop and slant forward with the top edges nearly parallel to the bridge of a straight nose. They are the fifth most recorded breed in the United States, they are known for large litters of piglets. They are known for their ability to cross well with other breeds and they produce a large and flavorful ham and loin.



**Poland China** - The Poland China is one of America's oldest breeds. First bred in Miami Valley, Ohio in 1816, they derive from many breeds including the Berkshire and the Hampshire. Poland China hogs are typically black with white faces and feet, and a white tip on the tail. Known for their large size, the Poland China is one of the most common breeds produced in the United States.



**Spotted Pig** - The Spotted Pig is the ancestor of the Poland China and Gloucester Old Spot breeds. It has become extremely popular in the United States because of its high meat quality and ability to gain weight quickly. The floppy eared Spotted Pig has black and white spots with no red or brown tints.



**Yorkshire** - Developed in England in the county of York, the Yorkshire is also known as the "English Large White" and was first brought to Ohio around 1830. The most recorded breed of swine in the United States, the Yorkshire is white in color with erect ears. They are very durable and muscular with a high proportion of lean meat and low back fat.

## Even More Pig Facts!

- Out of all farm animals, pigs have the best sense of smell.
- Even though they don't seem like it, pigs are the cleanest farm animals. They roll in mud because they don't sweat and that is their way of cooling off.
- Pigs can run a 7-minute mile.
- Pig heart valves can be used to replace damaged human heart valves.
- Swine were among the first of all animals to be domesticated.

# Frequently Asked Questions



**Q:** What happens to piglets after they are taken away from their mother?

**A:** This process is called weaning. After 21 days the piglets do not need their mother's milk anymore. They are taken to new area with pigs the same age. From here on out they will be eating rations of grain.

**Q:** Why aren't mother sows allowed more room to move around?

**A:** To us, it may seem as if they don't have enough room. However, our needs as humans are different from those of an animal. It's not always about how much space, but what space is available and how best it can be utilized. Some farmers confine the mother pigs because they could cause great harm to the piglet by laying on them without realizing it.

**Q:** Why are some pigs kept inside?

**A:** Pigs are kept inside for the same reasons we stay inside: health, comfort, safety, food and water. Being inside makes it easier for the pigs and for their caretakers so neither of them have to fight weather conditions. Also, sows who are smaller, slower and timid eaters may not get their share of feed. When placed individually, sows are allowed to eat at their own pace.



**Q:** What do pigs eat?

**A:** Most pigs eat a diet of corn, soybeans, vitamins and minerals. Much of the corn and soybeans fed on Kansas farms will be grown by the farmer or by members of the local community.

**Q:** What do modern pig barns look like?

**A:** There are four types of modern barns. Each barn serves a unique purpose, to provide the best care for the pig at a certain age. All modern pig barns have features similar to what you have in your house. There are temperature controls to help the barns stay at a specific temperature, similar to the thermostat in your house that turns on and off your heat and air conditioning. Also, all pigs have access to fresh feed and clean water in barns.

**Gestation barn** – This is where the sows are kept while they are pregnant.

**Farrowing or birthing barn** - This barn is warm, quiet, softly lit and is designed to make sows and newborn piglets as comfortable as possible. The care for both sows and baby piglets are of utmost importance at this time.

**Nursery barn** - Piglets are weaned at 10-15 pounds, or 21 days after birth, and transported to the nursery barn. These barns are designed to keep young pigs warm and healthy. This can be a stressful time for the piglets, so the barn is kept warm (about 80 degrees) and softly lit to ensure the baby pigs are comfortable and healthy.

**Finishing barn** – Once they are around 40-60 pounds (around 6-8 weeks of age) the pigs are moved to a finishing barn. These barns have some climate control but are not entirely enclosed, like the farrowing and nursery barn. Pigs stay here until they are sent to the market, usually when they weigh around 270 pounds (around 5-6 months old).

**Q:** Are there hormones in pork?

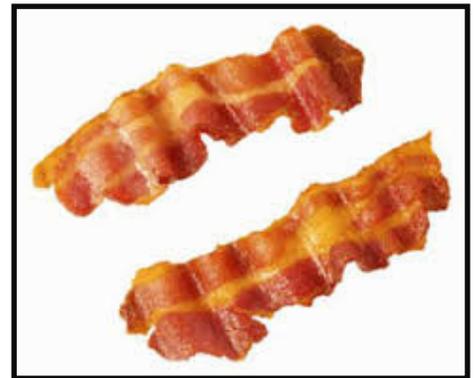
**A:** All animals, including humans, naturally produce hormones which are needed for normal growth and functioning. Federal law does not permit the use of added hormones in swine production, therefore pork products in the United States do not contain added hormones.



- ◆ Pork is one of the most commonly consumed meats worldwide, with evidence of pig husbandry dating back to 5000 BC.

- ◆ Pork has more protein than chicken and is high in zinc, iron and B-vitamins.

- ◆ Over a third of the fat in bacon is the same as the healthy fat found in olive oil, which is known to lower cholesterol levels.



- ◆ Kansas has around 1,500 hog farms.

- ◆ When they are born, piglets weight 2-3 pounds; At 4 weeks, pigs weight 15-20 pounds; At 8 weeks, pigs weigh 40-60 pounds; At 6 months, pigs weight approximately 250 pounds.

- ◆ Pigs grow fast because they eat a good diet. For a pig to reach 250 pounds, it will eat 600 pounds of corn and 100 pounds of soybean meal. That's a lot of grain!

- ◆ About 98% of all pigs marketed in Kansas live inside barns to help the animals with the extreme Kansas temperatures, both cold and hot.

- ◆ More than 99% of Kansas farms are family owned. That said, the farms are not all the same. Some farmers raise pigs inside barns, others in pens or pastures and some are in hoop buildings. Some raise only mother pigs or market hogs, white others raise pigs from birth to market. Why? It's simple; our farmers do what is best for their farm, their family and their community.



- ◆ You'd be surprised at the number of things that are made from pigs! There are more than 500 different types of important things besides meat that come from pigs. Examples of pig by-products are chewing gum, animal feeds, leather, glue, combs, buttons, plastics, paintbrushes, plywood, adhesive, insulation, upholstery, cosmetics, antifreeze, cellophane, floor waxes, cement, crayons, chalk, matches, putty, and linoleum.



**Fun Fact:** Did you know there is breed of pigs that is covered in more hair than most? Check them out at <http://www.npr.org/>

## Resources

Kansas Pork Association  
Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom  
Pork Food Service  
Fair Oaks Farm  
Pork Checkoff  
Eat Pork

***Provided by Kansas Farm Bureau to educate young people, parents and teachers about where our food comes from. America's food supply is safe, affordable and abundant but also vastly misunderstood by the consuming public.***

***It is the intention of Kansas Farm Bureau to improve the public's knowledge about the importance farming and ranching plays in our quality of life.***