

Note: I am enrolled in a swine project and feeding two pigs this summer just like youth members and their projects.

Title: Healthy Piggy!

Cindy A. Kinder, University of Idaho Area Extension Educator

I am going soon to get my pigs. When I select my pigs I will be looking for muscling, trimness, structure, soundness, growth, frame and performance. But I will also purchase a healthy pig. A healthy animal has an appetite, drinks more water and gains weight more efficiently than a sick animal. This increases my odds to have a higher average daily gain and a lower feed cost per pound of gain.

One thing I will be asking the producer is what medications have been given to the pigs and when. I need to know this for my records plus I can watch my pigs for health changes. It is much easier to prevent diseases with good management practices than to treat pigs that have become sick.

Once I get my pigs I will be observing them for a couple weeks. They may act unhealthy at first because they are stressed from moving to the new location. Health issues can be greatly minimized by providing my pigs with proper nutrition and a clean pen, feeder, and waterer. That is why my pen, feeder and waters are ready.

There are many different types of diseases that can affect swine health. At the county weigh-in, your pigs will be vaccinated for many things including erysipelas which causes sudden death, skin disease and lameness, and pleura pneumonia which can cause pneumonia, sudden death and chronic unthriftiness.

Pigs can also get internal and external parasites. My pen has a dirt floor so the potential to have worms is possible. I will need to de-worm my pigs for roundworms, lungworms, stomach worms and/or whipworms. Lice and mange mites could also be a problem. I will have to watch my pigs for those things.

So what does a healthy pig look like?

Signs of a healthy animal are eyes that are bright and alert. Its ears are perked and they are listening. Its coat is shiny and their nose is moist. Symptoms of a healthy animal are a normal temperature, pulse and respiration. The standard temperature for a pig is 102.5°F, The pulse should be between 60 and 80 beats per minute and the respiration rate between 8 to 18 breaths per minute. A sick animal may show several signs. These can include humped-back, snotty nose, dry crusty nose, scours, slow moving, or lack of appetite. Symptoms many vary and include abnormal temperature, pulse, and/or respiration.

If I decide to give any medications I must read the label. Misuse of any medications can leave residues in the meat of my animals. I need to read the labels and make sure I am giving the correct amount and I also need to put the medication in the correct location, such as behind the ear, avoiding major muscles.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself.

- Is your pig healthy?
- How do you know your pig is healthy?
- What vaccines were given at weigh in?
- What location was the vaccine given?
- What does your pig weigh?
- What should it weigh at fair time?
- How much is your pig eating?

