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# Management of newly purchased feeder pigs

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## Quick Facts

New feeder pigs on the farm should be isolated for three weeks in clean, warm and dry quarters. A thorough medication program for new feeders should be followed. Proper nutrition and the control of disease and parasites is important to giving new feeder pigs a good start.

All shipped feeder pigs are subject to the stresses of fatigue, hunger, thirst, temperature changes, ration changes, different surroundings and social problems. Almost every group has a shipping fever reaction. Care of newly arrived pigs must be directed to relieving the stresses and treating the shipping fever correctly and promptly.

To give yourself the best chance for success with newly purchased feeder pigs, put your emphasis on these points:

- 1) A dry, draft-free, well-bedded facility.
- 2) A specially formulated starter ration.
- 3) Adequate intake of medicated water the first week.
- 4) Prompt and correct treatment of sick pigs.

## Arrival on Farm

Check the pigs carefully on arrival at the farm, and reject those that do not appear as described by the seller. In most instances, suppliers provide no warranty, expressed or implied, for performance or health of the pigs after they have been accepted by the producer.

Facilities and equipment to receive the pigs should be prepared well in advance. Feed should be mixed and medication should be ready for the water. Provide newly purchased pigs with a clean, dry, disinfected environment. Disinfectants quickly neutralize when applied to dirty or manure-covered floors. Apply cresylic acid, iodine or phenol-derivative disinfectant to all surfaces and equipment.

Allow pigs to rest in a clean, dry, draft-free, well-bedded facility, isolated for a minimum of three weeks from all other pigs on the farm. The optimal temperature of the area is 75°F (24°C). Auxiliary heat will be necessary at certain times of the year to maintain this temperature.

This facility should be located where pigs can be observed several times a day for the first 10-14 days. It is not generally recommended that feeder pigs under 70 pounds (32 kilograms) be placed on totally slatted floors.

Where more than one pen is used, sort pigs by size into pens. New animals should be grouped with no more than 50 pigs per pen. This reduces stress and makes observation of the pigs easier. Provide a separate hospital pen for sick pigs.

Quality feeder pigs properly managed, will begin to reach 220 pounds (99 kg) on the following schedule, depending on management techniques and weather conditions.

Initial pig weight	Days to 220 pounds (99 kg)
40 lb (18 kg)	110 days
50 lb (23 kg)	105 days
70 lb (32 kg)	90 days
100 lb (45 kg)	70 days

## Floor Space

Upon arrival provide at least 4 square feet (.4 square meter) for 30-50-pound (14-23-kg) pigs. Providing additional space is beneficial for heavier or stressed animals.

## Water Medication

Water medication is a must. It often is desirable that newly purchased feeder pigs have access to clean, unmedicated water for 12-24 hours after arrival; and then begin medicating. Allow one waterer for each 25 pigs. A palatable product containing the products of the sulfa group and electrolytes, or water-soluble antibiotics and electrolytes, should be supplied in a tank or by any other means in which actual water consumption can be measured.

A pig normally will consume approximately two times as much water as feed. This is approximately ½ gallon (1.9 liters) per day for a 40-pound (18 kg) pig, depending on weather conditions. If the medicated water consumption is below this amount, the pigs are not receiving the required medication level, and you should consider changing to a more palatable product, or adding a flavor enhancer (Jello) to make the medication more palatable. This treatment should be continued for about one week. If mechanical waterers such as nipple waterers are used, be sure the pigs know how to operate them.

## Feeder Space

Provide at least one uncovered feeder space for each four pigs. Where there are lids on feeders, the lids should be tied open for the first several days or until such time as the pigs are conditioned to raising the lids.

## Nutrition

A specially formulated starter ration is beneficial for the first 4-5 days following arrival.

The ration for newly arrived feeder pigs should 1) contain 12-14 percent protein, 2) have some extra fiber, and 3) provide a high level of vitamins and antibiotics. Table 1 presents a sample ration for starting feeder pigs.

Vitamin levels should be made available at approximately two times that recommended by the National Research Council to compensate for lowered feed consumption.

The addition of 1 pound (.5 kg) of ferrous sulfate and ½ pound (.2 kg) copper sulfate per 1,000 pounds (450 kg) of complete feed often is helpful in reducing shipping stresses and correcting anemia conditions. The sulfate may make the pigs' manure black.

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To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products and equipment occasionally will be used. No endorsement of products named is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

**Table 1: Example of a feeder pig ration to be fed the first 4-5 days.**

Ingredients	pounds (kilograms)
Corn or milo	700 (315)
Oats or barley	175 (79)
Soybean meal (44%)	100 (45)
Dicalcium phosphate	10 (4.5)
Limestone	10 (4.5)
Swine trace mineralized salt	5 (2.3)
Vitamin-additive premix*	+++
Total	1,000 lb (450 kg)

\*Premix for 1,000 lb of ration contains the following: Ferrous sulfate, 1 lb; riboflavin, 1 gm; pantothenic acid, 5 gm; niacin, 15 gm; choline, 50 gm; vitamin A, 3 million I.U.; vitamin D, 300,000 I.U.; vitamin E, 10,000 I.U.; vitamin K, 2 gm; vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, 16 mg; aureo SP-250 (to provide chlortetracycline, 50 gm; sulfamethazine, 50 gm; penicillin, 25 gm) or tylan-sulfa (to provide tylan, 50 gm; sulfamethazine, 50 gm).

This highly fortified, lower protein ration should be fed the first 4-5 days. Then gradually shift to a regular feeding program. Remove the fibrous feed gradually—about half of it from the first batch of feed prepared and the rest from the next batch. Replace the fibrous feed with a source of protein to bring the level of protein to 16 percent. Feed a 16-percent protein ration until the pigs weigh 80-100 pounds (36-45 kg).

## Feed Additives

Consult with a veterinarian in selecting additives.

Use the highest FDA-approved preventive level for the additive selected. FDA-approved levels of feed additives are preventive levels and are not sufficient for treating sick animals. In the case of sick animals, specific medication must be administered by injections and/or the drinking water.

Veterinarians are encouraged to use the State Disease Diagnostic Laboratory to confirm their diagnoses of any serious problems.

Preventive levels of recommended feed additives per 1,000 pounds (450 kg) of complete feed are as follows:

Aureo SP 250—125 gm  
CSP 250—125 gm  
Tylan-sulfamethazine—100 gm  
Neomycin—70 gm  
Stafac—50 gm  
Terramycin—25 gm  
Bacitracin—50 gm  
Mecadox—25 gm

Furazolidone—75 gm

The above list is not in order of preference. The choice will depend on the veterinarian's recommendation based on previous farm history and additive availability. Regulations concerning approved additives and their levels change continually. Therefore, be sure to follow FDA regulations and label directions on the use of additives.

## Internal Parasites

Deworm the pigs on the day of arrival, or wait 2½-3 weeks. If there are obvious signs of illness, delay the deworming until after recovery. Use a broad spectrum dewormer such as Atgard (in feed only) or Tramisol (in either the feed or water).

## External Parasites

Use Malathion or other pesticides recommended for controlling lice and mange, following the label directions. Spraying is recommended, as soon after arrival as possible and as often as necessary, for external parasite control. If not in an environmentally controlled facility, choose a calm day with the temperature above freezing. Do not spray visibly sick pigs.

## Individual Animal Treatment

Animals showing signs of disease (depressed, weak, gaunt, difficult breathing, scouring) require individual treatment with injections of antibacterial products. Upon the advice of a veterinarian, individually treat sick animals for at least 3 consecutive days.

**WARNING:** Read labels and follow directions for use and withdrawal before marketing to avoid residue in meat products.

## Disease Control

A veterinarian should be called immediately if unusual problems or losses occur.

In cases of death losses or severe problems, make a record of the ear-tag or identification numbers of the first pigs affected so that the origin of the herd can be identified. Send a list of these tag numbers to the supplier immediately so that the problem can be traced to its source.

Watch closely for any signs of illness such as labored breathing, coughing or scours. Early treatment is the cheapest and most effective way of preventing death losses.