

Feeder pigs: uniform lots mean higher profits

By **Richard Barczewski**
 University of Delaware
 NEWARK, Del. — Selling feeder pigs can be frustrating, especially to people new to the hog business, or those unloading a few pigs their own operation can't handle. As a grader at a local feeder pig sale, I thought that now might be a good time to review what graders and buyers look for in a feeder pig.

Graded feeder pigs need to be identified (by ear tag) prior to delivery to the sale site. Upon arrival, pigs are grouped according to weight and graded. Grades are based on muscling and general health of the feeder pig. Most pigs fall into the U.S. 1 or 2 grades; however, piglets showing little muscling and a lot of fat cover may be graded U.S. 3 or 4. The last two grades—U.S. utility and U.S. cull—are reserved for extremely thin, narrow piglets with a minimal amount of muscling. Difference between these two grades are in health.

Graders are also responsible for removing any undesirable piglets with defects that make them a poor investment or risk to other herd animals. These defects include hernias, atrophic rhinitis, abscesses, intact (uncastrated) males, severe parasite infestations, lameness and any other potential swine health problem.

The ultimate goal is to provide buyers with pigs that have the potential to develop a desirable carcass. Any defect that would hinder this goal could result in the pig being ungraded. If you're at a graded feeder pig sale and see one or more of your pigs ungraded, ask why. What you learn can be useful in correcting the situation. If atrophic rhinitis is the problem, vaccinating may be helpful. Ex-

ternal parasites can be controlled by spraying with an approved insecticide, while hernias may require some genetic changes since they can be inherited. Don't be afraid to ask, since they're your pigs.

Why do we have graded pig sales? The answer is simple. Graded pigs are more valuable to buyers than straight run pigs. Ideally, the feeder pig buyer likes to buy pigs in groups that will finish together at the same weight, in order to sell them for a premium price as fat hogs. Buying a large group of feeder pigs at a similar weight and grade increases the chance of producing a uniform lot of finished hogs.

Packers like to see uniform lots of hogs, since a uniform product is more valuable to them. It's amazing how often loads of pigs are brought to market with wide weight ranges. I've sometimes seen small groups at a graded scale—10 to 15 animals—that ranged in weight from 20 to 80 pounds.

I realize some small producers aren't able to produce uniform lots, but if you plan to sell at a graded sale, uniformity is to your advantage. Otherwise you'll be stuck with small lots of animals (one to four per lot) that bring lower prices because the buyer will have to mix several lots to fill a pen on his finishing floor. Mixing is less desirable because it results in greater stress and reduced piglet performance on the finishing floor.

Under ideal grading systems, a U.S. 1 feeder pig will grow into a U.S. 1 market hog. The same trend follows for the other grades. Since there's a fine line between a low U.S. 1 and a high U.S. 2, graders usually group piglets as U.S. 1-2 or U.S. 2-3, and so on. Pigs from the same farm are usually similar in

their conformation and will fall into one of the above grades, provided the genetic makeup of the herd is similar.

How do you produce uniform lots of feeder pigs? This is a difficult question with no easy answer. The best way is to start with a uniform sow herd. It's also important to breed your animals in groups. This will result in large numbers of similarly aged piglets which, if the sow herd is uniform, will be alike in size and conformation. Such

piglets can be managed as a group.

For example, they can be treated for external parasites, vaccinated for atrophic rhinitis and castrated under a normal schedule. When sows don't farrow in groups, it's harder to schedule routine management practices. In addition, group farrowing allows for all-in/all-out management, with proper disinfecting between farrowing groups. This helps reduce piglet losses and disease which can also affect piglet

uniformity at weaning.

Raising feeder pigs is a high management enterprise that requires a lot of time and effort on the part of the manager for optimum production. To enhance marketability, try to produce uniform groups of feeder pigs. Graded feeder pig sales offer an opportunity to realize higher market values for your pigs. However, to optimize profits, you must be able to offer larger (15 and up) groups of uniform piglets.

Chester Co. Crops Day scheduled

WEST CHESTER — Chester County Crops Day will be held on Tuesday March 18, 1986 at the East Brandywine Fire Hall in Guthriesville beginning at 9:15 a.m. The discussion will focus on two important crops to Southeast farmers—alfalfa and corn. Topics to be covered include how to pick top corn varieties, corn insect control, corn cost of production control, alfalfa insect control, and the effect of weeds on alfalfa yield and quality.

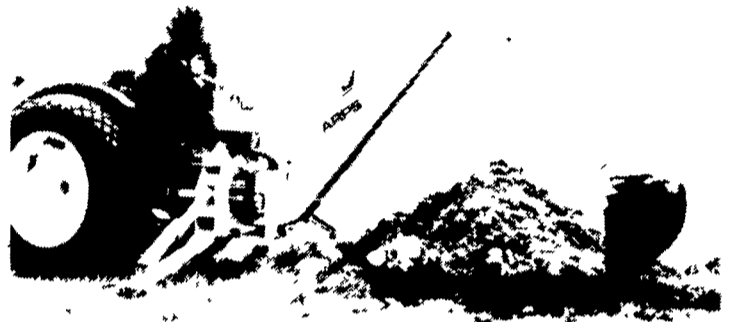
Farmers attending the day's activities will be able to recertify their private pesticide license, visit the exhibitors displaying crop production supplies, and visit the mobile manure and soil testing van. Also, the Chester County Soil Conservation District will award its annual "District Cooperator of the Year" Award.

Featured speakers include Dr. Sidney Bosworth, and Dr. Joseph McGahon, both Extension agronomy specialists, and Dr. Dennis Calvin, Extension specialist in entomology.

East Brandywine Fire Hall is located in Guthriesville along Rt. 322 in Chester County. Hamilton Bank is a co-sponsor of the day's

activities. Please make reservations for lunch by contacting the Chester County Extension Service at 696-3500.

New Arps backhoe developed



The new Arps Model 105 Backhoe will fit standard tractor three point hitches with Cat. I-II size. Digging depth is ten foot with a two foot flat bottom. The reach from the center line of the swing pivot is thirteen feet. The Model 105 Backhoe joins Arps family of backhoes available for tractors from 18 horsepower to 100 horsepower. For more information, contact Hamilton Equipment, Inc., 567 South Reading Road, Ephrata, PA 17522.



PEANUT DAYS

NOW THRU MARCH 29th

FREE
 Salted-in-the-shell Peanuts
 While You Shop



Lancaster Store:
 Rt. 896 So. of Rt. 30E
 (717) 687-7642
 Mon.-Thurs. 8-6;
 Fri. 8-9; Sat. 8-5

HUSKEE RIDERS

6 H.P. 30" CUT, SIDE DISCHARGE REAR ENGINE RIDER

FRONT MOUNT GRASS THATCHER 44-20498 **\$69**
 REAR MOUNT GRASS CATCHER 44-20480 **\$139**

- Electric Start with Alternator 5 Speed In Line Transmission
- 9 Position Height Adjustment 44-20464

\$799

HUSKEE 11 H.P. 42" CUT RIDING MOWER

- Briggs & Stratton Engine
- Five Speed Transaxle
- Built In Carry All Compartment
- 42" Twin Blade Side Discharge Full Floating Deck 44-20155

\$999

HUSKEE MOWERS

3 H.P. 20" CUT LAWNMOWER
 • 3 H.P. Briggs & Stratton Engine 3-Position Manual Height Adjustment 7" Poly Wheels 44-18043

4 H.P. 22" CUT PUSH MOWER
 • 4 H.P. Briggs & Stratton Multi-Engine 3-Position Fingertip Height Adjustment 8" Steel Wheels 44-18085

4 H.P. 22" CUT SELF-PROPELLED MOWER
 • 4 H.P. Briggs & Stratton Multi-Engine w/Front Drive Front & Rear Safety Ruffles
 • 9-Position Fingertip Height Adjustment 44-18360

4 H.P. 22" CUT HIGH WHEEL MOWER
 • 4 H.P. Briggs & Stratton Multi-Engine
 • Manual 3-Position Height Adjustment
 • Comfort Grip on Handles 44-18425

4 H.P. 22" CUT SELF-PROPELLED HIGH WHEEL MOWER
 • Front Wheel Internal Gear & Pinion Drive
 • Side Discharge
 • Briggs & Stratton Engine 44-18433

109⁹⁹ 174⁹⁹ \$235 \$225 \$259

HUSKEE TILLERS

3 H.P. CHAIN DRIVE TILLER
 • 3 H.P. 4 Cycle Briggs & Stratton Engine
 • Adjusts From 7" to 18 1/2" Width 44-03318

\$239

5 H.P. TILLER WITH REVERSE
 • 5 H.P. 4 Cycle Briggs & Stratton Engine
 • Hardened Steel 13" Slicer Tines 44-03365

\$339

FURROWING TOOL 44-03373 \$12⁹⁹

FURROWING TOOL 44-03373 \$10⁹⁹

10 CU. FT. HEAVY DUTY UTILITY CART
 • 16 Ga. Steel Construction 44-05202

\$169⁹⁹

5 CU. FT. WHEELBARROW
 • Seamless Tray Eliminates Shovel or Load Hang-Up
 • Tray Braces Prevent Flaring 44-00113

\$69⁹⁹

YOUR CHOICE \$4⁹⁹

GARDEN HOE
 • Flame Hardened 48" Welded Handle 44-14007

BOW RAKE
 • 48" Handle
 • 14 Teeth 44-14015

LONG HANDLE ROUND POINT SHOVEL
 • #2 Size
 • 48" Handle 44-14023

4-PRONG CULTIVATOR
 • Welded Head
 • 48" Handle 44-14031

GARDEN SPADE
 • "D" Handle 44-14049

HUSKEE 18 H.P. 42" CUT GARDEN TRACTOR

- Briggs & Stratton Twin Cylinder Engine Heavy Duty Transaxle Capable of Using Flow Disc Cultivator
- 4 Speeds Forward 1 Reverse
- 5 Position Deck Height Adjustment 44-20202

\$1599

GARDEN TRACTOR BATTERY 04-70807 \$25⁹⁹

TSC Stores Also Located In:

PENNSYLVANIA CARLISLE 1188 Spring Rd formerly Arnold Motors 717 245 2334 Mon Thurs 8-6 Fri 8-9 Sat 8-5
 LEBANON 720 Quentin Road 717 274 2106 Mon Thurs 8-6 Fri 8-9 Sat 8-5
 YORK 2400 West Market St 717 792 3676 Mon Thurs 8-6 Fri 8-9 Sat 8-5
 POTTSTOWN 335 West High St 215 327 4465 Mon Thurs 8-6 Fri 8-8 Sat 8-5
 MARYLAND WESTMINSTER 119 Railroad Ave 27 East Manchester Road 301 848 2060 Mon Thurs 8-6 Fri 8-8 Sat 8-5