



# Facts & Figures About Canadian Pigs

## In General:

### About Canada's Hog Industry

- Statistics Canada reported about 13.2 million pigs in Canada and 3.1 million pigs in Ontario including 304,800 sows and bred gilts (July 1, 2015).
- 1,369 pork producers in Ontario marketed 5.17 million hogs in 2015, approximately 4.02% more than in 2014.
- Pork producer numbers, like all farm numbers, have continually declined and are down over 93% from 1979.
- There are fewer than half as many pork producers as there were 10 years ago.
- 37.1% of farmers market between 500 and 3,000 hogs per year. Approximately 36.3% of producers market more than 3,000 animals per year as farms continue to specialize and grow in size as an attempt to be more efficient.
- Over 97% of Canada's farms are still family owned and operated. Ontario's swine industry remains dominated by the family farm.
- The U.S. and Japan are our major export markets with 38% going to the U.S. and 19% going to Japan. Mexico, China and South Korea rounded out the top five as of November 2015.



Statistics courtesy of Ontario Pork

## You were asking about...Pigs

### Housing: Where Do Pigs Live?

Most pigs in Canada are kept in barns to provide protection from predators, extreme weather, parasites and disease. Barns maintain an optimal environment with ventilation systems that control humidity and temperature. Strict sanitation and restricted farm entry programs are designed to help farmers maintain optimal animal health and biosecurity.

Pigs can be aggressive by nature and competitive for food and space, so the animals are often kept either individually or in small groups to ensure their social and nutritional needs are met.

After sows (mature females over 6 months of age) farrow (give birth), the sow and piglets are often kept in farrowing pens – specially designed stalls that give piglets access to nurse while allowing them

a place to sleep and exercise so that the sow won't accidentally lie on them. The sow's movement is restricted – she has sufficient room to stand up, lie down, and move back and forth while small pens on either side protect the piglets for their first two to four weeks.

Today's farming methods strive to ensure a consistent, top quality food product for the consumer by raising animals in a clean and well-managed environment. A farmer's goal is to maintain high husbandry standards while keeping production costs economical. Modern hog farming uses husbandry practices in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Recommended Code of Practice, which is currently being revised and is developed by farmers, government, animal protection groups, researchers and processors. Copies may be found at [www.livestockwelfare.com](http://www.livestockwelfare.com).

## Nutrition: What Do Pigs Eat?

Pigs are omnivores (they eat a diet of animal and plant origin) and they were originally kept on the farm to make good use of the feed scraps from the household, barnyard and fields.

Today's commercially raised pigs are fed grain-based, nutritionally balanced rations that are often in a pelleted form, similar to dog kibble. These complete rations are typically based on corn, soybean and barley with vitamins and minerals added to balance dietary requirements for each stage of growth and reproduction.

Weanling pigs will consume approximately a half kilogram of pelleted feed every day, while market hogs (growing pigs) will eat approximately

two kg per day. A pig going to market will eat 280 kg of feed in its lifetime, which translates to 3.7 kg of feed for every 1 kg of pork on your plate.

A pig will drink between five and seven litres of water every day (about the same amount it takes to brush your teeth if you leave the tap running.)

One pig will produce about 3.5 litres of manure each day, which provides valuable nutrients to be recycled back to the land as a natural fertilizer for the next field crop. For more information on hog farming and the environment, visit: [www.ontariopork.on.ca](http://www.ontariopork.on.ca).

## About the Life Cycle of Pigs...

**Piglets:** from birth to approximately three weeks of age, a piglet will grow from a birth weight of one or two kg to seven kg while drinking the sow's milk. They are given mineral and vitamin supplements and are vaccinated against disease. They are born with razor sharp milk teeth which are usually clipped by the farmer soon after birth to prevent them from biting the sow while nursing. Many farms also trim the end of the piglet's tails where there are no nerves at the same time to prevent 'tail-biting' later in life—a habit of pigs that may cause discomfort and sickness to their pen-pals later on. Male piglets are also castrated at this time.



**Weanling pigs:** from three to 12 weeks of age, young pigs still require warmer facilities than the older pigs. They are kept in small groups, in barns or pens, at warm temperatures designed for weanling pigs as they grow from seven kg to 37 kg. Many farms specialize in raising weanling pigs, and practice what is called "all-in/all-out" management — where the entire barn is filled with weanlings in one day, and emptied

when the pigs are 12 weeks old. This allows the farmer to thoroughly clean and disinfect the barn before the next group of weanlings arrive to help keep piglets healthy.

**Grower/Finisher pigs:** from 12 weeks of age to six months old, barrows (neutered males) and gilts (young females) are sorted to pens according to their size, gender and temperament, where they will grow to reach a market weight of 100-110 kg.

**Breeding Stock:** The best pigs are kept to replace animals in the herd. Sows may end up back in the breeding barn, producing 2 litters of 8 to 12 piglets per year with a gestation (pregnancy) of 115 days (easy to remember as 3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days).

Mature sows can reach 200 kg in size.

Most breeding is now done by artificial insemination with fresh or frozen semen, meaning that boars (mature male pigs) are often kept at separate breeding stations. This allows farmers to select the best genetic lines from around the world to achieve their production goals. Boars can weigh over 270 kg.

## Animal Health & Biosecurity

Some farmers might ask you to take a shower or put on plastic boots over your shoes before you go into their barn. Other farms do not allow any visitors at all, people or animals. These protocols are part of what is called 'biosecurity', and it is one part of a herd health program that helps to keep pigs healthy. Not allowing visitors into the barn helps to keep germs or sickness out. Farmers do treat animals with medications when they are sick, but prefer prevention over treatment.

## Breeds

Pig breeds come in all sizes, including the small pygmy hog, which stands one foot tall at the shoulder and weighs 13 pounds. There are over 29 breeds of domestic pigs raised around the world. The most popular commercially raised pigs in Ontario are crossbred (incorporate two or more purebred lines) mainly descended from Landrace & Yorkshire lines. They are usually pink but they do come in other colours, for example, black and white pigs descend from such breeds as Hampshire and red pigs come from Duroc lines.

For information on breeds of pigs visit: [www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/swine/](http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/swine/)

## Off to Market

When the time comes to ship to market, market hogs are loaded on specially designed trucks under strict guidelines for transportation, regulated under the Federal Health of Animals Act and the new Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Livestock: Transport. For more information in transportation in Ontario visit <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/animalcare/transportation.html>

## PIG TRIVIA

### Did You Know...

- Pigs or hogs are part of the order Artiodactyla (even toed, hooved animals) and the family Suidae. The five genera and nine species live on every continent except Antarctica.
- Wild pigs roam forests, meadows, and swamps, living on an omnivorous diet of fungi, roots, bulbs, tubers, fruit, snails, earthworms, reptiles, young birds, eggs, small rodents and carrion.
- In Canada, consumers are used to the taste of pork from neutered male pigs. Testosterone from intact males may give the meat a distinct flavour known as 'boar taint'. Males are usually castrated before three weeks of age to prevent this from happening.
- Sweating like a pig is to not sweat at all! Pigs have no sweat glands so they rely on shade and water to keep cool. Some barns even have sprinkler systems to keep the pigs cool and comfortable.
- The largest pig recorded in history was Big Bill, a 5-foot high, 9-foot long Poland China hog, who weighed in at 2,552 pounds at a fair in Tennessee in the early 1930s.
- "Bud", a crossbreed barrow from Texas, became the world's most expensive pig when he was sold for \$56,000 on March 5, 1985.
- A pig's squeal can reach up to 115 decibels, 3 decibels higher than the sound of a supersonic Concorde.
- The pig is rated the fourth most intelligent animal.
- The first domestication of the pig is thought to have taken place in China around 4900 BC and may have occurred as early as 10,000 BC in Thailand. China still is the world's largest producer of pigs.

## Pig-tionary

Here are a few terms you need to know to get around a pig barn:

- **Barrow:** Male pig that has been neutered
- **Biosecurity:** A program to protect the barn and the animals from outside dirt and germs. Visitors are asked to wear clean clothes, wash their boots and even sometimes have a shower to ensure they don't bring any germs into a hog barn.
- **Boar:** Adult male pig kept for breeding purposes
- **Canadian Quality Assurance® program:** A Canada-wide initiative to monitor the health and wellbeing of hogs. Farmers are required to keep very detailed records of all farm practices, feeding programs and medication used in the barn, and a veterinarian visits regularly to ensure that the pork is produced to the very best food safety standards.
- **Colostrum:** The first milk a mother produces after giving birth. It is full of nutrients and antibodies, which gives the piglet a strong, healthy start in life.
- **Farrow:** To give birth
- **Feeder pig:** Piglet after it's weaned from the sow, also known as 'weaner' pig
- **Gestation:** Length of pregnancy. A sow is pregnant for approximately three months, three weeks, and three days.
- **Gilt:** Female pig that has never farrowed
- **Grower-finisher barn:** Where the pigs are raised from about 10 weeks of age until market.
- **Litter:** Group of piglets born at one time from the same sow
- **Market hog:** Barrow or gilt raised for meat production, weighs up to 110 kg
- **Piglet:** Newborn pig, weighs 1-2 kilograms
- **Pork producers:** Farmers, the people that raise pigs
- **Runt:** Smallest piglet in the litter
- **Sow:** Adult female pig (Note that 'sow' rhymes with 'cow'!)
- **Ventilation:** A system to move fresh air through-out the barn.

 Pig  
FACT SHEET

## Pork: The Product

Canada's pork has a high demand globally and is exported to over 90 countries around the world, including the United States, Russia, Japan, China and South Korea. Some farmers may also market their pork products directly at farm fresh local markets and restaurants or through farm gate sales.



### What Comes from Pigs?

Each 100 kg live hog produces about 65 kg of saleable pork, including ham, pork chops and sausages, bacon, ribs, ground pork, hocks and stewing meat. There are approximately 15 kg of usable by-products that are used whole or rendered for a wide variety of products such as leather, soap, cosmetics, medicines and medical treatments like heart valves and insulin.

For more product information and some great recipe ideas please visit [www.putporkonyourfork.com](http://www.putporkonyourfork.com).

### About Pigs – Additional website links

Canadian Pork Council  
Visit: [www.cpc-ccp.com](http://www.cpc-ccp.com)

Canada Pork International  
Visit: [www.canadapork.com](http://www.canadapork.com)

Ontario Pork:  
Visit [www.ontariopork.on.ca](http://www.ontariopork.on.ca)

Alberta Pork  
Visit: [www.albertapork.com](http://www.albertapork.com)

BC Pork  
Visit: [www.bcpork.ca](http://www.bcpork.ca)

Manitoba Pork Council  
Visit: [www.manitobapork.com](http://www.manitobapork.com)

Porc NB Pork  
Visit: [www.porcnbpork.nb.ca/home](http://www.porcnbpork.nb.ca/home)

Pork Nova Scotia  
Visit: [www.porknovascotia.ca](http://www.porknovascotia.ca)

PEI Pork  
Visit: [www.peipork.com](http://www.peipork.com)

Fédération des producteurs de porcs du Québec  
Visit: [www.leporcduquebec.com/fr/accueil.php](http://www.leporcduquebec.com/fr/accueil.php)

Saskatchewan Pork Development Board  
Visit: [www.saskpork.com](http://www.saskpork.com)

Visit two Canadian hog farms on line at  
[www.virtualfarmtours.ca](http://www.virtualfarmtours.ca)

 **Pig**  
**FACT SHEET**

Prepared by:



Farm & Food Care Ontario  
[www.farmfoodcare.org](http://www.farmfoodcare.org)  
519-837-1326  
[info@farmfoodcare.org](mailto:info@farmfoodcare.org)