

PERILS AND PITFALLS OF PASTURE BASED SWINE

Ulster County Cooperative 2017

Raising Pigs on Pasture is Nothing New

- Pigs came to the America's on the first ships and have served a important in agriculture since.
- Originally used to provide meat and tallow but as that industry was supplanted, we needed leaner pigs for more profit.



This need for leaner pigs means they were bred for confinement systems where their caloric needs could be better managed.



We have a very successful and efficient swine program in the united states, but greater awareness of food systems has opened up a new market for pastured pork



1. Pigs outside need to be hardy breeds

The most difficult thing you can do is put production animals into a pasture based system. These animals are ideal for growing out in sheds but have a difficult time making it in the real world.

Try these breeds or breed crosses if you can find them...



Yorkshire (not from production system)

Large Black

Glouster

Berkshire

Old Spot

Tamworth

Hampshire



2. You must rotate pigs outside, pigs will quickly denude your land and your trees

The Spanish Iberico pig myth has inspired many people to try and raise pigs in the woods.

So...you wanna feed your pigs just acorns...well what are they going to eat in May?

Pigs are really tough on land

Pigs root and eat all available vegetation

Pigs begin to root deeper and compact the land as they grow

Pigs construct wallows, further denuding the land and making parasite repositories



2. You must rotate pigs outside, pigs will quickly denude your land and your trees

Now you have a moonscape where
nothing can grow
water runs right off the land
often tree roots are damaged
nutrient blooms on land lead to increased
parasitism and slower growth rates

The way to avoid this scenario is to rotate....
and you must be especially vigilant if the pigs are
in wooded areas





2. You must rotate pigs outside, pigs will quickly denude your land and your trees

In silvopasture scenarios with ruminants we understand that because of competition for light and slower nutrient cycling, the forest will always take longer to recover than pasture.

Stocking rates are directly related to size of animal

So rotate...here's an estimation...Never let the pigs eat or destroy more than 70 percent of the vegetation. At least 30 days of rest. Always ere on the side of caution.

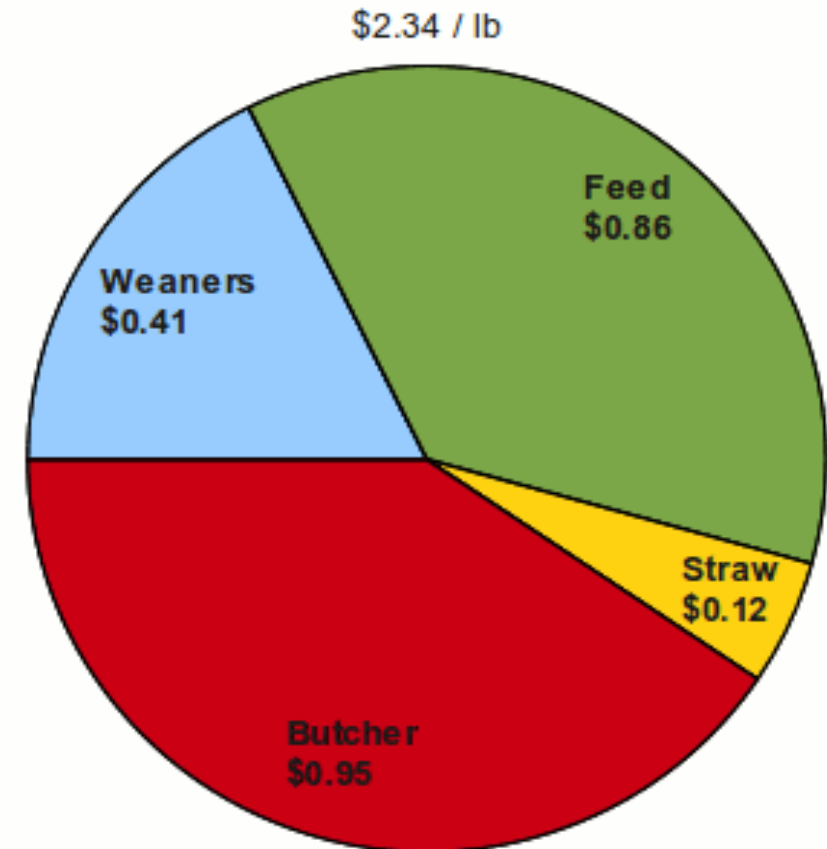


3. Pigs outside have higher caloric requirements

Pigs are going to consume more feed when raised outdoors...and the biggest cost of raising pigs is FEED

	Price	\$ / lb
Weaner Pigs (2 @ \$75/each)	\$150.00	
Feed (1350 lbs)		
Pig Starter (1 bag)	\$26.59	
Grower (11 bags)	\$126.50	
Finisher (15 bags)	\$159.00	
Straw	\$44.00	
Livestock Total:	\$506.09	\$1.39
Farm Kill	\$100.00	
Cut / Wrap (\$0.44/lb hanging)	\$182.50	
Cure (\$0.45/lb)	\$62.55	
Butcher Total:	\$345.05	\$0.95
Final Total:	\$851.14	\$2.34

Cost Factors Per Pound of Meat



3. Pigs outside have higher caloric requirements

To combat this, utilize deep bedding systems in your portable housing. This can reduce feed use by up to 20% depending on size of animal

Hay is ideal as they will consumer some of it but wood chips will work too if you make them or get them cheap

This is critical when the pigs are still small and the weather is cold



4. Feed usage is less efficient, so supplementary feed is integral to profits

Pigs are the clean up crew of the farm and will readily consume wasted or spoiled calories from the farm such as whey, bruised apples, or vegetable scraps.

Back to the acorns



4. Feed usage is less efficient, so supplementary feed is integral to profits

Brewers grains are not very nutritious although they are a good supplement when paired with something with higher caloric values (such as whey)

Whey is awesome...whey is really heavy...and stinky



4. Feed usage is less efficient, so supplementary feed is integral to profits

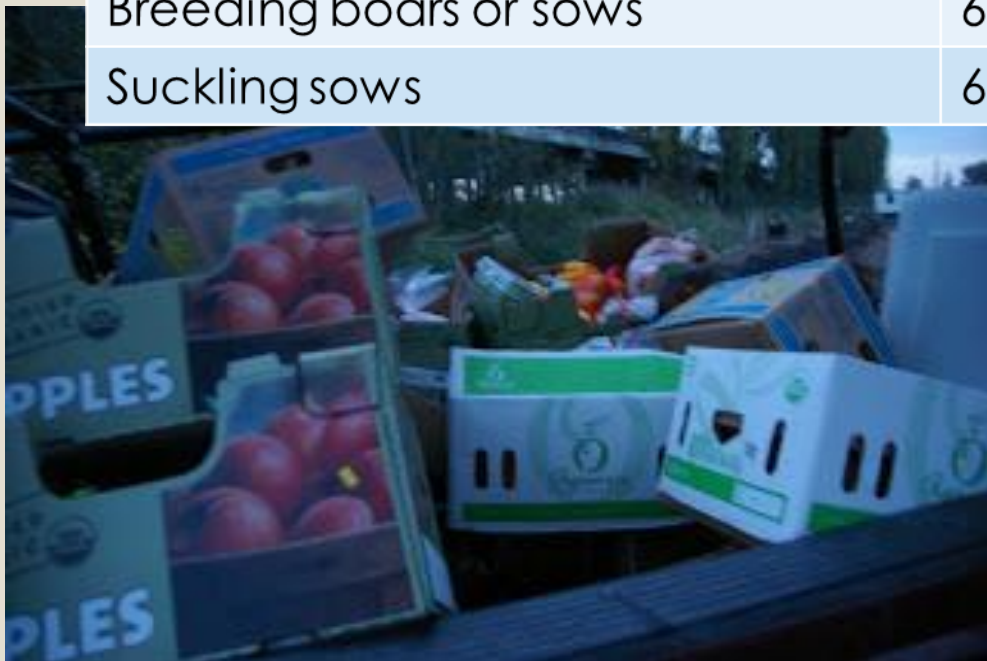
Talk to orchards, large retail chains, local farms (pumpkins)

Stay away from restaurants



5. You can only supplement not substitute

Stage	Amount of Feed
Weaner	2.5 lbs daily
Growers up to 60 lbs	3.0 lbs daily
Growers up to 100 lbs	4.5 lbs daily
Growers up to 140 lbs	7.0 lbs daily
Growers over 180 lbs	8.0 lbs daily
Breeding boars or sows	6.0 lbs daily
Suckling sows	6 lbs plus 1 pound per piglet

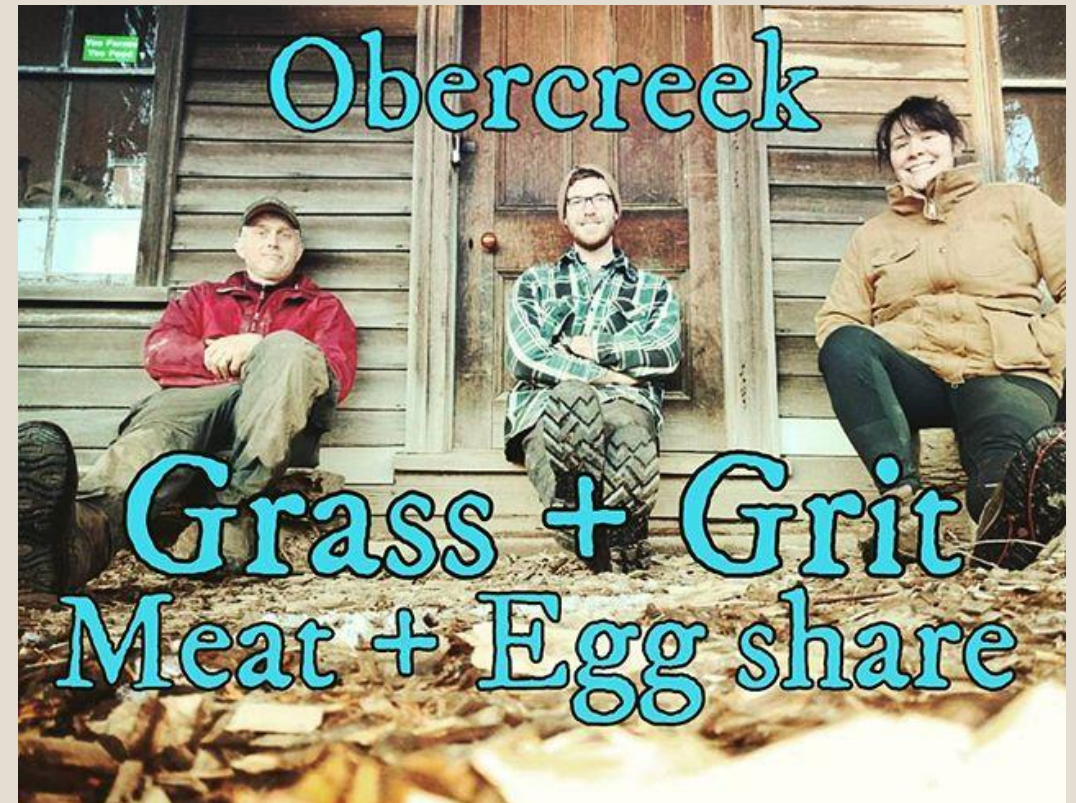


6. Must market as premium product in retail modalities

Marketing is just as important as production

You have to have a story to tell

They are paying a premium to understand your stories, to tell others of your stories, and feel better about the food they are eating



6. Must market as premium product in retail modalities

Some markets are better than others

On farm

CSA

Web sales

Farmer's markets

3rd Party

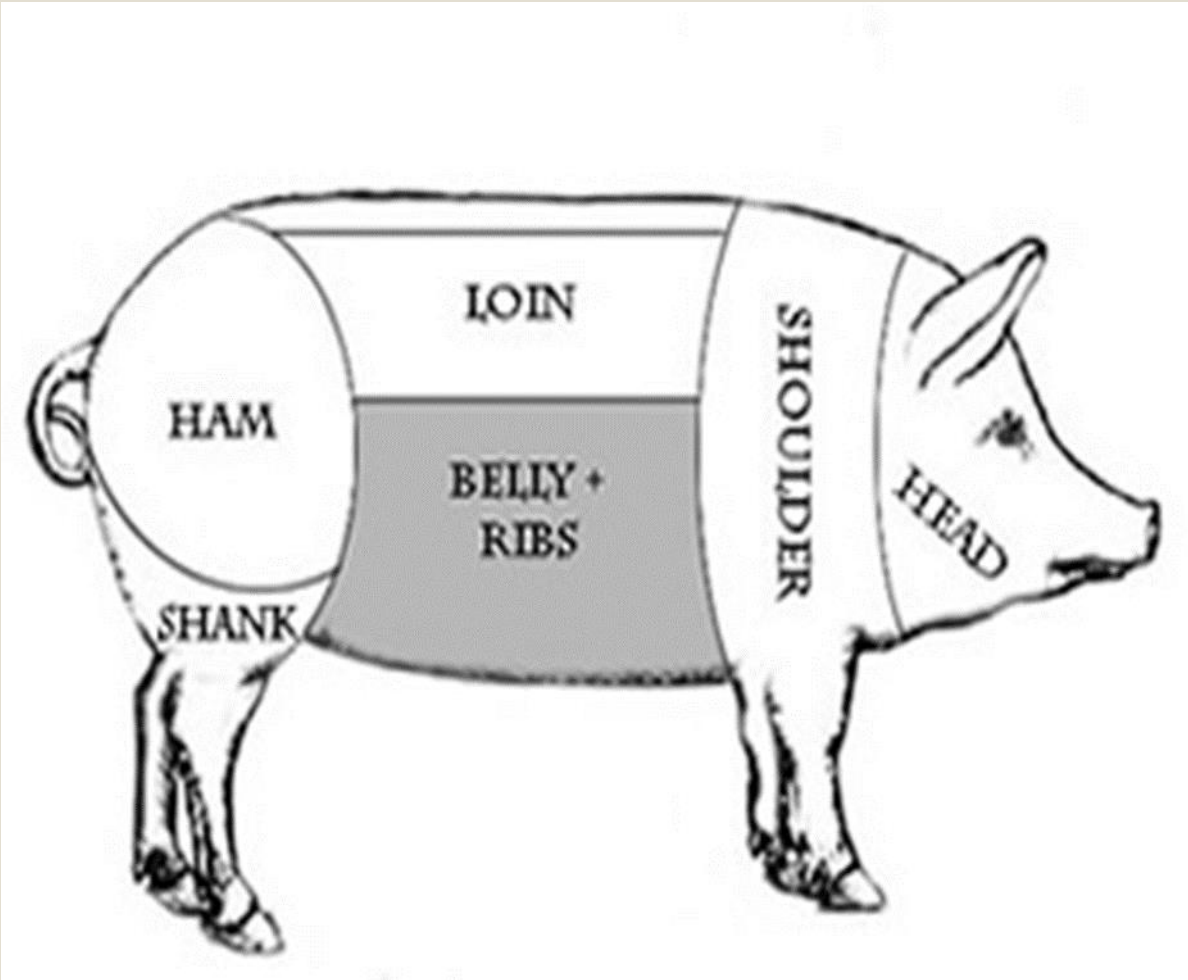
Wholesale



7. Train the pigs to the fence



8. Schedule processing dates one year in advance



9. Monitor your land, make improvements as necessary

Was your rotation too short and do not have enough grow back

Are you only getting weeds to grow back

Is water infiltrating into your pastures

Seeding Annuals into rotation

Species Succession in Disturbed Soils (2 year cycle in healthy soils)



10. Become sustainable

“Able to be sustained at a certain rate”

If you run out of money you are not sustainable

If you run out of energy you are not sustainable

If you run out of land you are not sustainable

If you run out of product you are not sustainable (unplanned)



3 Very Different and Very Successful Pastured Pig Farmers

1. Joel Salatin
Polyface Farm, Virginia

2. Walter Jeffries
Sugar Mountain Farm, Vermont

3. Bruce King
Ebey Farm, Washington



So What are the main differences between conventionally raised pork and pasture raised pork??

The 10 Commandments of Pastured Pork Production

- 1. Pigs outside need to be hardy breeds**
- 2. You must rotate pigs outside, pigs will quickly denude your land and your trees.**
- 3. Pigs outside have higher caloric requirements**
- 4. Feed usage is less efficient, so supplementary feed is integral to higher profits**
- 5. You can only supplement not substitute**
- 6. Must market as premium product in retail modalities.**
- 7. Must train the pigs to the fence.**
- 8. Schedule processing dates one year in advance**
- 9. Monitor your land, make improvements as necessary**
- 10. Become sustainable**