

Sources of Pigs Entering the Grower/Finisher Phase on U.S. Pork Operations

Swine producers have several options for obtaining young pigs to finish for marketing. Some producers farrow pigs from their own, on-site breeding herd, and some form cooperative sow centers from which each producer receives feeder pigs from the cooperative farrowing unit. Other producers may purchase pigs directly from a feeder-pig or weaned-pig producer to fill their grower/finisher unit.

An alternative source of young pigs is an auction or sale. Since swine diseases are transmitted most frequently by pig-to-pig contact, many producers attempt to obtain pigs from a single source on one farm. When producers find it necessary to obtain pigs from multiple sources, many maintain some type of isolation to prevent commingling of pigs from different farms, thus lowering risk of disease transmission.

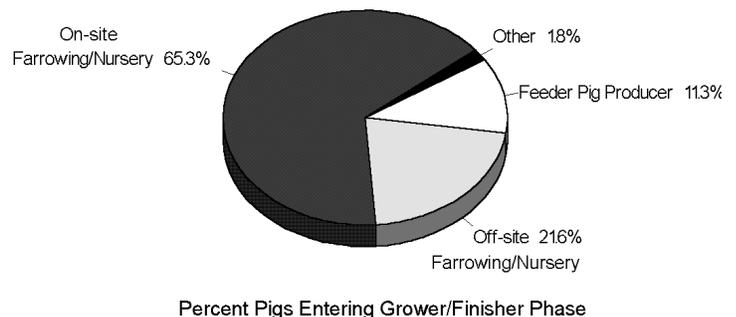
The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System described how swine producers obtained grower/finisher pigs in the Swine '95 study. The 16 states¹ involved in Swine '95 represented nearly three-fourths of U.S. pork producers and over 90 percent of the hog inventory.

The most common method of bringing pigs into the grower/finisher phase of production was on-site farrowing and nursery units with 76.7 percent of the operations using this practice. Ten percent of the swine operations used off-site farrowing and nursery units as a source of pigs, and 13.8 percent obtained pigs from feeder pig producers, both contract and noncontract. Only 5.9 percent purchased pigs from an auction, sale barn, or livestock market.

Use of off-site farrowing units and nurseries appeared to be more common with the larger producers. Although 10.2 percent of the operations had off-site capabilities, 21.6 percent of the pigs entered the grower/finisher operation from off-site facilities (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Sources of Pigs Entering the Grower/Finisher Phase



¹ Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

The same information, presented by herd size shows that 9.7 percent of grower/finishers from herds marketing fewer than 2,000 pigs originated from off-site facilities. Whereas, for operations marketing more than 10,000 pigs, 64.4 percent of grower/finishers came from off-site farrowing and nursery units. Sixteen percent of pigs from herds marketing 2,000 through 10,000 pigs were raised off-site.

The nearly 6 percent of operations that purchased pigs from auctions, sale barns, or livestock markets represented only 1.6 percent of the pigs entering the grower/finisher phase of production. This avenue represented 4 percent of the pigs for producers marketing under 2,000 head. None of the operations marketing more than 2,000 head used auctions, sale barns, or livestock markets as a source of pigs.

Fifty-three percent of the operations obtaining feeder pigs from other producers were able to meet the desirable one-source goal (Figure 2). As swine operations became larger, sticking to the single source was more difficult.

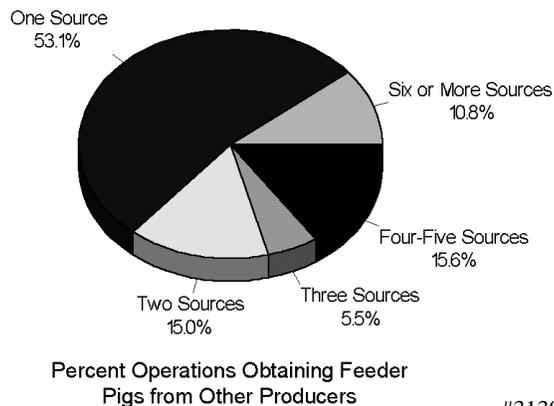
The average number of pig sources for smaller producers (fewer than 2,000 pigs marketed for slaughter) was 2.1 compared to the largest (10,000 or more pigs marketed) with 3.9 sources (Figure 3). The medium-sized producer (2,000 to 9,999 pigs marketed) averaged 3.0 sources for obtaining pigs.

Producers are generally aware of the risks of disease transmission among several-source pigs. Of operations that received feeder pigs from more than one source, 63.7 percent did not commingle pigs from different sources after they arrived in the grower/finisher units. Over one-third (36.3 percent) did commingle pigs after arrival.

NAHMS collaborators on the Swine '95 study included the National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA); State and Federal Veterinary Medical

Figure 2

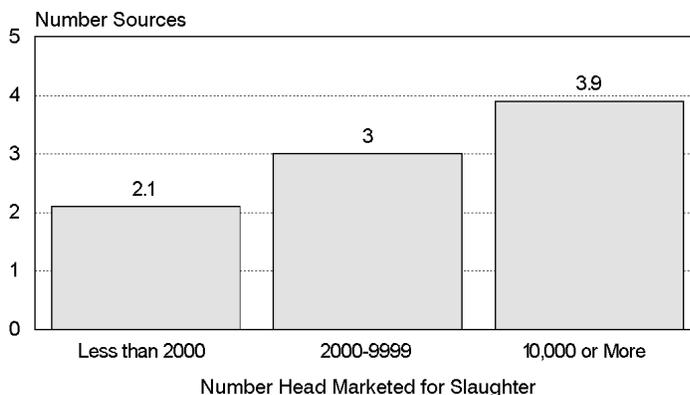
Number of Sources of Pigs Entering the Grower/Finisher Phase



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Figure 3

Average Number of Sources of Feeder Pigs from Other Producers by Herd Size



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Officers and Animal Health Technicians; and the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (USDA:APHIS:VS).

Other information from the Swine '95 is available. For more information on these topics or the study in general, contact:

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