

Pork in Kentucky

Pork production is an important industry for Kentucky farmers since the average American consumes about 50 pounds of pork per year! While pork represents a smaller part of our farming economy, Kentucky farmers raised more than 350,000 pigs for sale last year. Sales of market hogs (older pigs) and pigs brought Kentucky farmers about \$112 million last year.

Pigs are raised on farms across Kentucky, with most farms being located in the western half of the commonwealth. Since pigs are not able to sweat to keep cool like humans, many of those pigs are raised in temperature-controlled barns year-round. They also stay toasty warm in the winter. When pigs are raised outdoors, farmers use other means to keep their pigs comfortable such as mud holes and fluffy bedding. Most pigs are given a diet of corn and soybeans, but pigs are omnivores. That means they choose to eat both plant and animal foods. Some farmers feed their pigs left over food from their farms or from restaurants. This is a good way to use food waste.

Farmers keep sows (female hogs) to give birth to and mother new pigs. A sow can have at least two litters of pigs per year, and each litter has 8-12 piglets. Many piglets are born

in farrowing stalls. These keep the mother from accidentally crushing her babies; remember, she weighs hundreds of pounds, and the piglets weigh only a few pounds when they are born. Farrowing stalls also make it easy and safe for the farmer to feed the sow, check to see if the mother is healthy, and give medicine when it is needed. After three weeks, the pigs are weaned and can move to a solid food diet.

Kentucky farm families work to provide the best care for their pigs and ensure we have safe food to eat. Once the pigs weigh between 250 and 280 pounds, the farmer sells the pigs for processing. They will take them to one of Kentucky's USDA inspected meat processing plants that make pork available to eat through grocery stores and restaurants.

Pork is packed with important nutrients and minerals. It is an excellent source of protein, as well as thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, vitamin B6, phosphorus, zinc, and potassium. These nutrients are important to our health.

Many cuts of pork are considered lean, which means they are low in fat. Pork is eaten by more people than any other meat in the world!

It is important to cook pork to the correct temperature. To check if your pork is done, try using a digital cooking thermometer. Most pork should be cooked to between 145 to 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Precooked ham can be reheated to 140 degrees or enjoyed cold. Many American's favorite foods come from pork, such as ribs, bacon, chops, ham, hot dogs, and shoulder roasts (butt or picnic) often used for barbecue. After taking these popular cuts from the animal, the remaining meat is used for delicious sausage. It is likely you have enjoyed pork items at a barbecue or for breakfast.

Kentucky pork is actually used at Cracker



Barrel and Dairy Queen restaurants across the United States thanks to the Kentucky-based sausage processor, Purnell's "Old Folks" Sausage. This company is located in Simpsonville, Ky.

Pigs are also similar enough to humans that doctors can use their tissues and organs in surgeries. People regularly receive pig heart valves when their valves wear out. Pigs are incredibly valuable for human medicine.

Kentucky farmers work hard to raise healthy lean meat for consumers in our state and beyond. Pork plays an important role in our farming state.

Questions

1. How many pigs were raised for pork in Kentucky last year?

2. Why are most pigs raised inside of temperature-controlled buildings?

3. What is term for the number of pigs a sow has at one time?

4. Name two nutrients that can be found in pork. _____
5. Why are pigs valuable for human medicine? _____

