PIGS, PORK, SWINE

"No man should be allowed to be President who does not understand hogs."

-President Harry Truman

- Swine were among the first of all animals to be domesticated --around 6,000 years ago. The Chinese were the first to raise wild pigs for food.
- Bacon is one of the oldest processed meats in history. The Chinese began salting pork bellies as early as 1500 BC.
- The Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto brought the first swine (13 pigs) to the New World in 1539. By the time of DeSoto's death, three years later, his herd had grown to 700.
- The family name for hogs is Swine. The mother is a sow. The father is a boar. Babies are called pigs. Sows give birth to litters of pigs twice a year. Each litter usually has 8 to 12 baby pigs. Giving birth is called farrowing.
- Baby pigs appear very greedy when they are competing for food from their mothers. For this reason the words “pig” and “hog” have come to be associated with greedy behavior.
- Pigs are weaned when they are two to four weeks old. They are called “nursery pigs” until they reach 50 pounds and “growing/finishing pigs” from then until they reach about 240 pounds. After that they are called hogs. Hogs are usually taken to market when they weigh 240-280 pounds.
- Pigs weigh about 2 1/2 pounds at birth.
- When fully grown, boars (male hogs) may weigh more than 500 pounds, and sows (female hogs) may weigh from 300-500 pounds.
- Most hogs are sold when they are 6-7 months old and weigh about 210-250 pounds. If hogs are kept longer they are usually used for breeding.
- Hogs have small eyes and poor eyesight.
- Hogs have a total of 34-44 teeth.
- The hog’s snout is very sensitive to touch. Some producers put rings in hog’s noses to keep them from rooting, or digging up the earth, with their snouts. In the wild hogs feed themselves by digging for roots to eat. This can cause a lot of damage on a farm.
Hogs have four toes on each foot. Each toe ends in a hoof.

Hogs' bodies are stout, strong and covered with coarse, bristly hair. They have sharp tusks that help them dig and fight.

A pig's squeal can range from 110-115 decibels. Compare that to the Concorde jet, which is usually under 112 decibels.

Wild hogs are strong and fierce and live in forests and jungles in many parts of the world. Razorbacks (wild hogs with sharp, narrow backs) live in the Southeastern US and the West Indies.

In the past hogs were fed table scraps and had a reputation for eating just about anything. The meat from hogs fed that way was very high in fat. The hogs would eat corn, grass, clover or even table scraps that would have otherwise have become garbage. The word "hogwash," meaning something that is worthless, came from this practice.

In some areas hogs would be turned out to find their own food. Hogs would roam freely, eating what they could find—acorns on the ground or roots, which they dug from the ground with their snouts. In Manhattan Island, New York the hogs rampaged through grain fields until farmers were forced to build a wall to keep them out. The street running along this wall became Wall Street.

Lard was in high demand for baking, so pork producers grew pigs that were very fat.

Today’s swine producers are more careful about what they feed their animals. Modern hogs eat corn, wheat and soybean meal. Vitamins and minerals are added to increase growth and improve health.

Pork provides protein, B-vitamins and thiamin to our diets. Pork has three times as much thiamin as any other food. Thiamin changes carbohydrates into energy and promotes a healthy appetite.

Insulin and about 40 other medicines are made from pigs.

Pigs are not dirty. They can’t sweat, (no sweat glands) so they roll in the mud to keep cool. They lie in the mud to protect their skin from sunburn and biting insects.

Pig heart valves have been used to replace damaged human heart valves.

Pig fat can be used in weed killers, chalk, cosmetics, floor wax, crayons and antifreeze.

A pig can run a seven-minute mile.

Hogs do not overeat. They eat until they are full.

Hogs are smart animals. They learn to push a lever in the barnyard to get a drink of water or a dish of food. They have been taught to tumble, race, pull carts, dance and hunt.

Pigs are brave. One pig named Priscilla saved a boy from drowning. She is in the Pet Hall of Fame.

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**FUN PIG**

**Words or Pig Sayings**

- Bleed like a stuck pig
- High on the hog
- Kick the bucket
- Let the cat out of the bag
- Pig in a poke
- Pig headed
- Fat as a pig
- Eat like a pig
- Pig out
- In a pig’s eye
- Hog heaven
- Hog wild
- Hogwash
- Pigtail
- Piggy bank
- Pot Belly
- Male chauvinist pig
- Dirty pig
- As messy as a pig’s sty
- Bringing home the bacon
- Road hog
- Ham actor
- Pigskin
Colonists in Pennsylvania developed the practice of “finishing” hogs on corn (feeding them nothing but corn in the few weeks before butchering them). This practice improved the quality of the pork and laid the foundation for the modern pork industry.

Soldier hogs have gone to war. They have served as mine sniffers in battlefields.

The heaviest hog in history, Big Bill, weighed 2,552 pounds.

Pigs are curious and like to keep busy. Some farmers entertain their pigs with beach balls and old tires. Pigs also enjoy listening to music.

During the War of 1812, a New York pork packer named Uncle Sam Wilson shipped a boatload of several hundred barrels of pork to U.S. troops. Each barrel was stamped “U S” on the docks, and it was quickly said that the “U S” stood for “Uncle Sam,” whose large shipment seemed to be enough to feed the entire army. This is how “Uncle Sam” came to represent the U.S. Government.

The saying “living high on the hog” started among enlisted men in the U.S. Army, who received shoulder and leg cuts of pork while officers received the top loin cuts. So “living high on the hog” came to mean living well.
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