



Pigs 101

Slaughter

Knowing when to bring pigs to market can be challenging. What the desired market weight is will depend on what the end product will be. How long it will take to reach that market weight will vary greatly depending on the breed and how the pigs have been fed. The most common breeds sold for small scale production in Nova Scotia are Landrace and Duroc, with some Tamworth or Berkshire, though in smaller numbers. On average, the market weight for hogs in Nova Scotia is 90-150 kg for commercial production. Market weight for small scale production is generally slightly lower, approximately 75-80 kg. Note that the weights and percentages discussed in this section are general guidelines, and are not meant to be used as hard and fast rules. Each production system will be different and therefore yield different results.

Helpful terminology:

Live weight – The weight of an animal before it has been slaughtered and prepared as a carcass.

Market weight – The target weight for the pigs to go to the slaughterhouse.

Hanging weight/carcass weight – The weight of the carcass after it has been dressed (guts removed, blood drained, etc.), before butchering.

Cut weight – The weight of the final product after butchering. This will be the carcass weight minus some bone weight, trimming, moisture, etc.

The hanging or carcass weight of a pig will be approximately 72-75% of the live weight (with the skin left on). The cut weight will be approximately 75-82% of the hanging weight. This percentage can vary greatly depending on how cuts are trimmed, how much bone is removed, etc. For example, the percentage will be less if mainly boneless cuts are chosen. All weights

will vary depending on breed, condition, diet, as well as the presence of dirt and hair on the animal at the time of slaughter. Aging or further processing, such as smoking, will reduce the cut weight of the animal. A carcass that is aged in the cooler will lose moisture, and will therefore be lighter than a fresh cut carcass.

When planning for slaughter and processing, there are a few things to think about in advance.

- If the pigs will be slaughtered off farm, transportation to the slaughterhouse needs to be considered. Refer to the *Handling and Transportation* section of the Pigs 101 info sheet for additional information on transportation.
- There are a few options around how to have pigs slaughtered. They can be slaughtered on farm, at an uninspected slaughterhouse, or at a provincially inspected slaughterhouse. From a food safety perspective, a provincially inspected facility is the best option. If the meat will be sold be aware that **all** meat sold through retail and farm markets in Nova Scotia must be slaughtered at a provincially inspected abattoir. A list of provincially inspected slaughterhouses (updated August 2016) is included in this package. For the most up to date information, contact your regional Agricultural Resources Coordinator, whose contact information can be found at <https://novascotia.ca/agri/contactus/staffdir/branch.asp?dept=agr&orgLevelID=31> .

It is strongly advised that arrangements be made with the abattoir well in advance, as they get very busy and may not have the capacity to accommodate extra animals coming in on short notice. If the pigs will be slaughtered in one facility and processed in another, be sure to have a plan for timing that works with both facilities. Also, make sure to have enough freezer space to store the final product between the time of processing and the time of sale.

PigTrace

Traceability programs give animal health and food safety officials the ability to trace issues to a specific location in the case of an animal health or food safety outbreak as well as know areas where animals are located to be rescued in the event of a fire or natural disaster.

PigTrace is an industry-led, live-animal traceability program designed to manage traceability and ensure protection and prosperity of the pig industry in Canada. Nova Scotia is committed to this program and even if you only have one or two pigs for your own use, you must be a part of PigTrace. Pigs must be tagged with approved ear tags which contain both an individual identification unique to each pig and a herd identification, or have an appropriate, readable shoulder tattoo.

As well, according to the program, a location housing pigs must have a premises identification (PID). Again, this includes everything from large commercial operations to small, back-yard production. A temporary PID is issued at the time of registration with the program, and a permanent PID can be applied for with the Provincial Traceability Coordinator. The Nova Scotia Premises Identification office can be reached by phone at 902-890-9840, or by email at NSPID@novascotia.ca. More information about the Provincial traceability program and

requirements can be found at <https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/industry-protection/> .

It is a good idea to get tags in advance so that you aren't left stranded without them when it's time to take the pigs to slaughter, as provincially inspected slaughter facilities are not allowed to slaughter pigs that do not have the proper ear tag or tattoo.

All movements between premises must be reported within 7 days of transport via your account on the PigTrace website. This reporting includes transportation to a slaughter facility and removal of deadstock. More detailed information on the PigTrace program can be found at http://pigtrace.ca/wp-content/uploads/PigTrace-Program-Guide_EN.pdf.

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