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Feeder Pig Grading Standards

ANIMAL SCIENCE
FACT SHEET No. 11
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To be of maximum benefit to the swine industry, standards for feeder pig grades should be closely coordinated with the standards for grades of pork carcasses and slaughter swine. Effective April 1, 1969, feeder pig standards were established to correlate the grading of young pigs with the revised pork carcass and slaughter swine standards.

The grade of a feeder pig is determined by evaluating two general characteristics: 1) predicted carcass or slaughter potential, and 2) thriftiness or potential for rapid, efficient growth.

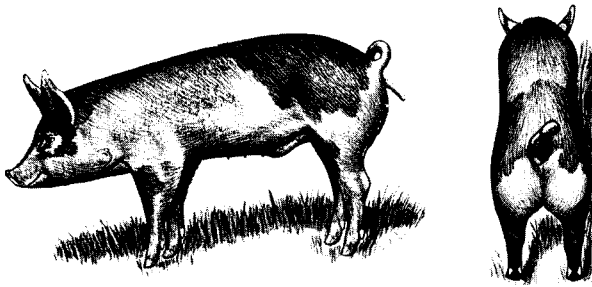
The predicted slaughter potential of a thrifty feeder pig is its expected slaughter grade at a market weight of 220 pounds. Slaughter potential is determined by a composite appraisal of the development of the skeleton and muscle. Both of these factors have an important effect on the development of muscle and fat as the animal grows. Size for age, health, and other factors are considered in appraising the thriftiness of feeder pigs.

Grades of feeder pigs are U.S. No. 1, U.S. No. 2, U.S. No. 3, U.S. No. 4, U.S. Utility, and U.S. Cull. Except for U.S. Cull, these names

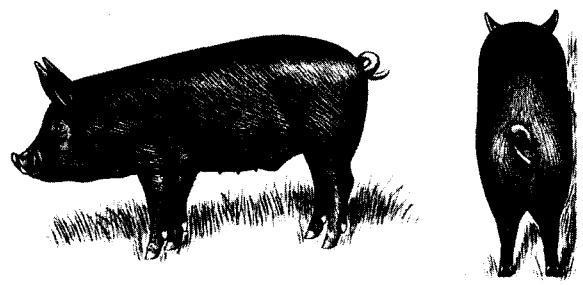
correspond to the five grade names for slaughter swine and pork carcasses. U.S. No. 1 through U.S. No. 4 grades include all pigs which are thrifty. Differentiation between these grades is based entirely on differences in predicted slaughter potential. Feeder pigs in the U.S. No. 1 grade have sufficient muscling and frame to reach marketable weight with a minimum degree of finish. Feeder pigs in the U.S. No. 2, U.S. No. 3, and U.S. No. 4 grades usually have progressively less muscling and less frame and are expected to have progressively more finish when marketed. The U.S. Utility and U.S. Cull grades primarily include pigs which lack thriftiness; such pigs may also show little potential muscle development. However, differentiation between the U.S. Utility and U.S. Cull grades is based entirely on differences in apparent thriftiness.

Most feeder pigs are marketed when relatively young, before reaching a weight of 125 pounds. At this age, sex condition (castrated or uncastrated, male or female) exerts little influence on the basic factors determining the feeder grade. Although sex condition may influence the market price in some instances, these feeder pigs standards are equally applicable for grading barrow, gilt, and boar pigs.

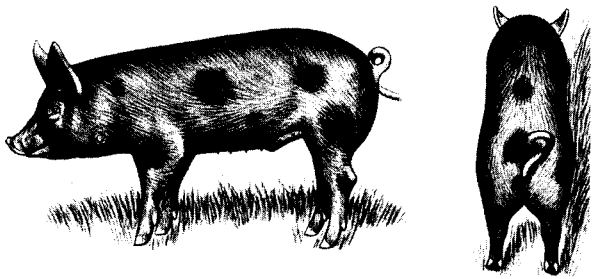
OFFICIAL FEEDER PIG GRADES



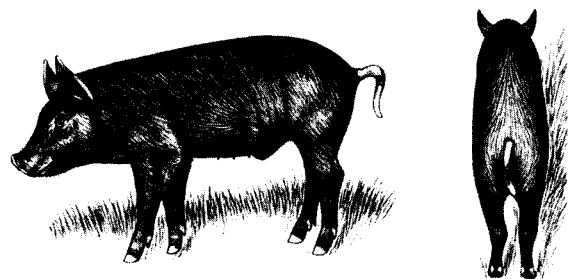
U.S. No. 1 feeder pigs have long hams and shoulders and thick muscling. The hams and shoulders are thicker than the back, which is well-rounded. Feeder pigs in this grade are expected to produce U.S. No. 1 grade carcasses when slaughtered.



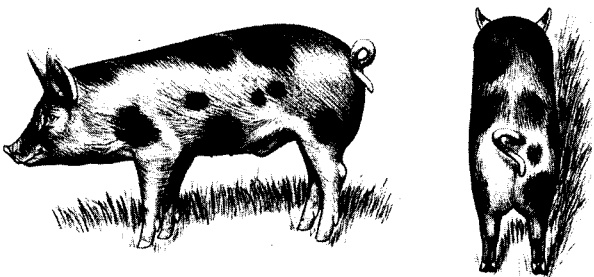
U.S. No. 4 feeder pigs are short and have thin muscling throughout, particularly in the lower parts of the ham toward the shanks. The back usually is wider than the underline. Feeder pigs in this grade are expected to produce U.S. No. 4 grade carcasses.



U.S. No. 2 feeder pigs are moderately long and have moderately thick muscling through the hams and shoulders. The back usually appears slightly full and well-rounded. This grade includes feeder pigs which otherwise qualify for the U.S. No. 1 grade but have less than moderately thick muscling and indicate more fat development. In this grade feeder pigs are expected to produce U.S. No. 2 grade carcasses when slaughtered.



U.S. Utility feeder pigs are small for their age and appear unthrifty. They often have a rough, unkempt appearance, indicating the effects of disease or poor care. The hams and shoulders usually are thin and flat and taper toward the shanks. The Utility grade feeder pigs may produce U.S. No. 1, U.S. No. 2, U.S. No. 3, or U.S. No. 4 grade carcasses when slaughtered at 220 pounds. If the unthrifty condition is not corrected, U.S. Utility grade feeder pigs will produce U.S. Utility grade carcasses.



U.S. No. 3 feeder pigs are slightly short and have slightly thin-muscled hams and shoulders. Feeder pigs in this grade are expected to produce U.S. No. 3 grade carcasses.

U.S. Cull feeder pigs typical of this grade are very deficient in thriftiness because of poor care or disease. They can be expected to reach a normal market weight only after an extremely long and costly feeding period.