



Wild Boar

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HISTORY

The wild boar is the ancestor of the domestic pig and is native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. The wild boar has been prized for centuries across Europe, Scandinavia, and Southern Russia, and was once considered the royal meat of kings.¹

PRODUCTION

A wild boar is an omnivore, feeding on fruits, nuts, seeds, grass stems, bulbs, and roots of plants as well as the eggs and young of ground nesting birds, small mammals, snakes, insects, other invertebrates, carrion, and fungi. The average hog has a life expectancy of about eight years.

Male hogs are mostly solitary, except during the breeding season, while females and piglets gather in groups of two to three animals.² The gestation period for sows is about 115 days. A litter may be from four to 22 (with an average of nine) young. The young are weaned between 56 and 84 days. Probably only one litter a year is produced in the wild state of our climate, but two are possible in farmed situations. The sows have eight to 14 teats, averaging about twelve.



Wild boar piglets weigh about two pounds at birth. After two or three months, the piglets are weaned and independent of the sow. Family groups usually break up once the young reach sexual maturity, which is usually within a year of birth for both males and females. Maximum life span is about 25 years.



Wild boar piglets with their mothers

PROCESSING

Demand for lean, nutritious, and tasty wild boar meat comes from the ethnic and health conscious consumers, as well as novelty markets where the primary purpose is food production. Processing of the wild boar is similar to a domestic hog production.

FACILITIES

The wild boars on many farms are kept in wooded areas and are raised outdoors year-round.



Wild boar being raised in the outdoors throughout the winter months



DIET

Wild boars are considered to have nutritional requirements similar to domestic hogs; however, wild boars are fed forages and grains.

In outdoor raising, they have access to roots, nuts, insects, forages, and natural minerals. They are also fed alfalfa and grain screenings. Straw is provided for bedding. With this high fibre diet, the wild boar takes twice as long to reach market weight as a domestic pig, but produces an excellent quality carcass of lean red meat. They have no need for medicated feeds, chemicals, or growth hormones.³

BREEDS

Wild boars, whose Latin name is *Sus scrofa*, are part of the true pig family. The term “wild boar” is used to describe both males and females. The initial breeding stock in Canada originated from Great Britain, Poland, Germany, and Sweden.

Both full-blooded wild boar and commercial standard-bred (hybrid cross with domestic swine) are being raised in Saskatchewan.⁴ Many producers use standard bred sows as they produce more pigs per litter than full blood wild boar sows.

ANIMAL CHARACTERISTICS

The maximum weight for a wild boar is about 400 pounds; most male wild boars in the wild weigh about 150 pounds. Females weigh slightly less. Wild boars are 3.5 to five feet long and stand up to two feet at the shoulder.



A lone male wild boar trudging through the snow

Wild boars have long snouts and the males have tusks which are used for digging up food such as roots, tubers, and insects. The length of snout is used by some as a measure of breed purity. The snout should measure nine inches from the tip of the nose to the inside of the eye.

The tail is straight and about 30 cm (one foot) long, with a tuft at the end. The ears are short and stiff and it has a long pointed snout and curved ivory tusks. The tusks are used for foraging and fighting.



Both sexes have 44 teeth including a well-developed set of canine teeth. The upper tusks act as whetstones to keep sharp edges on the lower ones.

The typical barrel-shaped body of this mammal is covered with long, coarse bristles (guard hairs). They like to wallow in water or mud in the heat of the summer day. The body colour of adult wild boars is a dusky reddish brown. Piglets have several brown and yellow horizontal stripes until they are about four months old.

Wild boar have poor eyesight, but a keen sense of smell and hearing. Like other ungulates, this species walks on its middle two toenails.

WILD BOAR AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Their presence in a native ecosystem is viewed with concern, as their rooting action disturbs the woodland soil. In confined areas, wild boar may remove all edible plant and animal life.

CAREERS

- Breeding stock producer
- Feed mill technician
- Veterinarian
- Veterinary technician
- Transportation
- Wild boar finisher producer
- Meat processing

NUTRITION

Wild boar is a lean, close-grained meat which is more flavourful than regular pork. It is dark red in colour and has a distinctive flavour. Wild boar is very high in protein.⁵ A 100 gram (3.5 ounce) serving of wild boar provides approximately 160 calories, four grams of fat, and 28 grams of protein.

BY-PRODUCTS

The main product of the wild boar industry is domestic red meat sales. Other saleable products include breeding stock, animals sold to trophy hunt ranch operations, as well as animals sold into ethnic markets.⁶

Cuts of meat are similar to domestic pork, and include:

- Bacon
- Roasts
- Pork chops
- Spare ribs
- Ground meat
- Ham



- Souvlaki
- Sausage

INDUSTRY IN SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Production: 12,108 wild boar in May 2006.

Number of Producers: 81 wild boar farms in May 2006.

INDUSTRY IN CANADA

Canadian Production: 20,898 wild boar in May 2006.

Number of Producers: 256 wild boar farms in May 2006.

Imports and Exports: Main export markets include the United States, Europe and Asian countries.

GLOSSARY

Barrow: a castrated male intended for market

Boar: breeders use the term as a sexually mature male

Farrow: to give birth

Feral Hogs: hogs that have escaped from the farm and are living in the wild

Gilts: un-bred females

Hog: large domestic pig, usually over 120 pounds

Piglets: baby pigs

Sow: older female having already given birth

Tusks: lower canines

Weaners: weaned, young pigs that have been taken off sows milk, and weigh 25 to 40 pounds

Witters: upper canines

Contributing Organizations and Individuals to this Project:

Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan
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CITATIONS

¹ "Wild Boar Rack", <http://www.blackangusmeat.com/shop/product.php?productid=17531>.

² Wildside Farm, "Wild Boar", <http://www2.connect.ab.ca/~wildside/wildboar.htm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Murray S. Feist, "Specialized Livestock", http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/specialized_livestock.html.

⁵ "Wild Boar", <http://www.blackangusmeat.com/shop/home.php?cat=254>.

⁶ Murray S. Feist, "Specialized Livestock", http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/specialized_livestock.html.