



**ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

SWINE



Q. Why do hogs' ears look ruffled?

A. What look like ruffles are actually *ear notches*. Notches in the hog's right ear identify the litter it belongs to. Notches in the left ear give the hog a unique individual number. Ear notches allow the farmer to record treatment and other important information about each particular hog as it moves about the farm. Ear notching should be done when a hog is between 1 and 4 days old.

Q. Do hogs bite?

A. Yes, hogs will bite. Biting behavior in a hog depends upon the hog's experiences. Generally, a hog will bite when frightened. However, a hog may bite out of frustration or because of a bad experience in the past.

Q. Why do some hogs have a curly tail and some almost no tail?

A. Some farmers choose to remove, or *dock*, their hogs' tails during the first week of life. Docking prevents hogs from biting each other's tails. It is hard to know if or when tail biting will begin, and if it does, how often it will occur. If a hog has a bitten tail, it can be painful because the tail, and sometimes the spine, can become infected.

Q. Why are there scratches on the hog?

A. Hogs like to scratch and rub on things. They also like to root and play with other hogs. The breeds that have lighter skin show the scratches from these natural behaviors more than others do. This is not a sign of abuse or neglect.



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Q. Do hogs always make this much noise?

A. Hogs have a lot to say, especially to other hogs. If you listen, you will hear different sounds and tones in the noises they make. These different noises all have meanings to other hogs.

Q. Why are canes or whips used with the hogs?

A. Touch is the best way to communicate to hogs where to move. Hogs are the only class of large animals that exhibitors are not allowed to lead into the ring with a halter and rope. Instead, they must teach hogs to respond to commands using a cane or whip. For example, the hog may learn that a tap on the side of the head means to turn in a specific direction. An exhibitor uses the cane or whip to touch the animal firmly enough to make it move, but not so hard that it hurts. Some exhibitors use one firm tap and some use many light taps to direct their animals. Hogs are very smart and learn quickly when properly trained.

Q. Why are the hogs rolling around on the wet concrete?

A. Barns are built to keep hogs cool. On a hot day, sometimes the hogs like to roll in the water for extra cooling like you might jump in a swimming pool or play in a sprinkler.

Q. Why are some hogs penned alone and others are together?

A. The hogs in pens with others have lived together before, so they are already familiar with one another. Hogs are able to recognize other hogs and if they are not familiar with each other, they may fight to establish a social order.

Q. Why are the hogs different colors?

A. There are many different breeds of hogs, just as there are different breeds of dogs, cats and other animals. The color of the hog can help you tell what breed it is. You can also tell the breed by looking at the ears. Some breeds have ears that are down, while others have ears that stand up.

Q. How can you tell if your hog is sick?

A. Farmers carefully watch their hogs' normal behavior, so they can often tell when a hog isn't feeling well just by the way it's acting. Sick hogs eat and drink less and rest a lot more than usual. They may also have a fever or show other symptoms. If farmers recognize any of these signs of illness, they can take appropriate action to help the hog get better.



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