4-H Animal Science
Project Meeting Guide, AS-74, '81

SWINE

CASTRATING A PIG

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IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

A 4-H member should learn the important management practice of castrating pigs. A boar pig produces a sex odor when it reaches maturity. This objectionable odor can then be detected in the meat consumed by the consumer.

WHAT YOUR 4-H'ERS WILL ACCOMPLISH

As a result of participating in the activities outlined in this project meeting guide your members will be able to:

1. Develop life skills of learning-by-doing, working together to solve a situation, and gain a sense of self-worth.
2. Demonstrate how to castrate a pig.

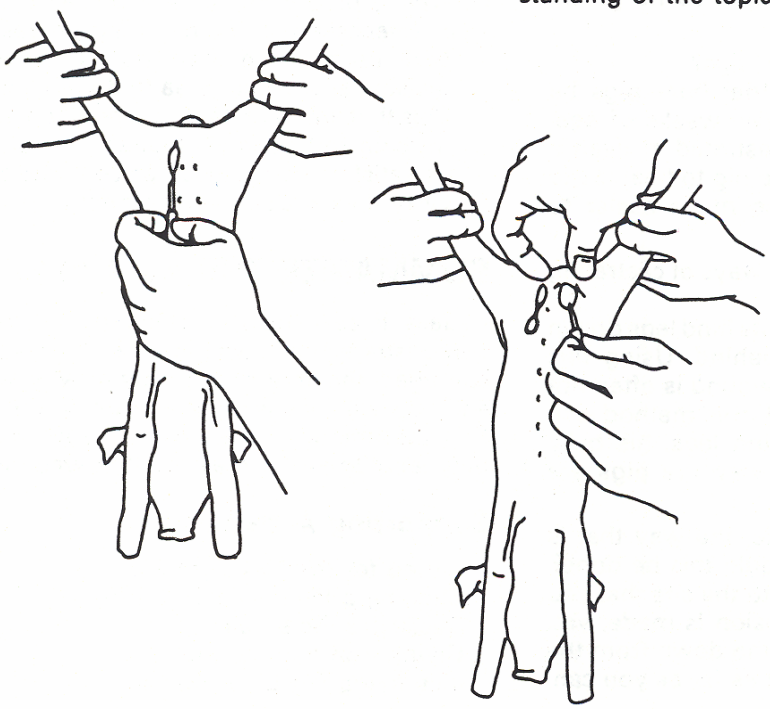
PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

The time spent planning the meeting with your junior leaders or other members, plus reviewing the resource materials and collecting the necessary supplies will be well worth the effort. Although this activity may be done on live pigs, the importance of allowing the members to practice first in a non-threatening atmosphere is important. The model pig made from the University of Minnesota Pig Pattern works well when this activity is practiced on the kitchen table.

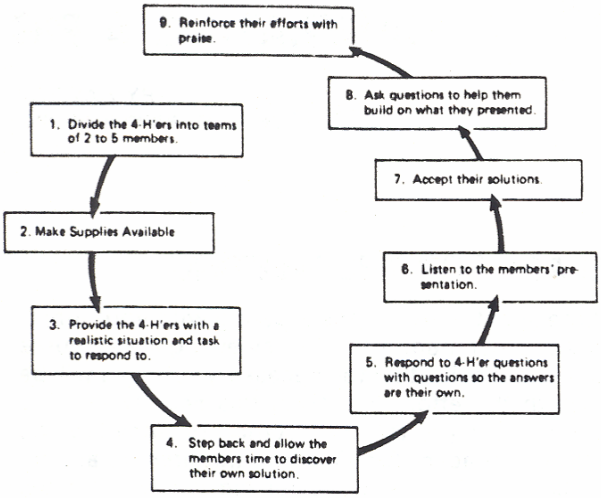
Supplies: knife or scalpel, disinfectant.

FACILITATE THE MEETING

Your 4-H'ers will enjoy the opportunity to demonstrate to you how they would castrate a baby pig using the supplies and training aids provided. By giving them the opportunity to learn-by-doing before you tell or show them how, you'll help them develop several important life skills as well as increasing their understanding of the topic.



The nine steps of this method as well as suggested situations to present, and questions to ask are outlined in this guide. Good luck.



SITUATION: Your 4-H sow farrowed two weeks ago. It is now time to castrate the boar pigs.

TASK: Demonstrate how you would castrate them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Q. Why castrate boar pigs?
A. In general to prevent the boar pig from passing on sex odor into the muscle tissue. It also makes him more gentle and easier to handle as he grows older.

Q. When should you castrate boar pigs?
A. It is generally recommended that boar pigs be castrated between two and three weeks of age. Occasionally, they would be castrated at even a younger age. This will allow the pig to heal faster with less stress. They are also much easier to handle at this age.

Q. What are the two recommended ways of castrating a boar pig?
A. 1) A pig can be laid upon its side, its hind legs drawn forward and castrated from behind. Using this method, good drainage of the wound is often not realized. 2) The second and preferred method is to hold the pig upright by his hind legs, his belly pointing toward you. In this way the pigs are castrated from the belly side.

Q. If castrating from the belly side, the way that is recommended by you, how would this be done?
A. You would apply a disinfectant to the site that you are going to cut. After the incision is made, you would take your thumb and come down from the top and push the testicle down as far as you can, until you can see the bulge in the scrotal pocket. Then taking a sharp scalpel, over this bulge, you would make approximately a one-half inch incision —not deep, but deep enough to cut through the skin and break the skin on the testicle sac. Then simply apply more pressure downwards and the testicle will pop out through the incision. This same process would be repeated on the other side. Once this has been completed, the testicles would be gently pulled outward exposing approximately a 2 ½" to 3" cord. At this point, one could pinch the base of the cord and gently pull the testicle away from the body or simply snip off the cord close to the body wall. The same process would be done on the other side. Following this again apply a disinfectant solution to the cut sites.

Q. What safety precaution should be taken?
A. Primarily you are trying to avoid cutting yourself. By using the thumb technique and applying pressure from above when pushing down on the testicle and then making your incision downward away from your thumb, you prevent the chance of cutting your thumb. If you would push upward with your thumb underneath the testicle and then make your cut over the testicle you would be pulling a scalpel down toward your thumb increasing your chances of injury.

Q. What size incision is recommended?
A. A ½" incision will be enough to allow the testicle to pop out in the very young pig. However, if one made a ¾" - 1" size incision this would allow better drainage. The point is, the incision should be made large enough for the testicle to easily pass out and allow proper drainage.

Q. Why is proper drainage important?
A. It is necessary in the repairing process. Fluids are built up and can drain out. This will allow the incision and the cut area to dry up and heal faster. Pigs that are castrated from behind would have the incision setting much higher. This does not allow as satisfactory drainage as compared to pigs that carry their incisions underneath their hind legs.

SUMMARIZE THE ACTIVITY

Usually if each team is allowed the opportunity to demonstrate their technique and questions are encouraged, the important points of why, when, where, and how will be answered and understood. One additional technique is to ask each of your members what they learned at the meeting that was new to them.

Supporting Activities

Caring for the Newborn Pig
Clipping a Pig's Needle Teeth
Docking a Pig's Tail
Giving Iron to Your Pig
Identifying Pig Litter Mates

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