

Red Wattle Hog Association Selection Guide

For registered breeding stock
Breed Standards in combination with basic soundness in a breeding hog

Detailed description

Head and face: Head proportionate to body-not too large or too small. Medium length snout, slight curve to almost straight nose. Eyes set wide apart and symmetrical, with wide forehead. Nose pliable with nostrils symmetrical and large.

Objections: Head out of proportion to body. Narrow between eyes or eyes set at different levels. Crooked or nose. Face extremely dished.

Animals with wide foreheads will usually have wide backs and chests. A longer shallower head correlates with a more wild-type body conformation that generally carries less meat.

Eyes: Large, bright, intelligent and kind.

Objections: Dull, small, weak.

Eyes should not be small, slanted or squinted.

Wattles: 2 wattles well attached and substantial, in the same location on the inside corner of the jowl on each side. Firm and of a kidney or thumb shape. Symmetrical of size and shape.

Objections: less than 2 wattles, poorly attached, located at any point other than the inside corner of the jowl.

Ears: Set wide apart on top corners of the head, symmetrical in form and attachment, upright, tipped or lopped. Slightly pointed and with a moderate thickness. Under control of the hog. Settling firmly out over the eyes as adults.

Objections: Nearly round, thick, not the same size, set and shape. Swinging/flabby and not under the control of the hog. (The hog should be able to perk up or move its ears.) Avoid ears that rollup along the side. Avoid ears set on the side of the head.

Adult ears should have the appearance of a visor over the eye, coming firmly from the head and out. Ends of ears may be tipped.

Neck: Thick, deep and slightly arched.

Objections: short, straight, thin, shallow.

Jowl: Broad, full, neat and smooth.

Objections: Large, loose, flabby, or small, thin and wedge-like.

Shoulders: Broad, very deep and full. Muscle should extend well down. Shoulder should not protrude above the line of the neck.

Objections: Small, thin and shallow. Protruding above the line of the back.

Chest: Large, full, deep and broad.

Objections: Flat, shallow or narrow. Front legs set wide apart and evenly spaced from chest.

Body: The body should be shaped like a block or brick. The body should have good depth from back to belly, indicating good capacity for organs. Long-backed, deep bodied animals carry larger quantities of high quality loin cuts. Balance length with functionality. Seek good balance front to back, well-developed shoulders and well-developed hams. The hogs should be symmetrical from front to back.

Back and Loin: Width evenly distributed from shoulders to rump when looking down on the hogs' back. Back slightly arching. Firm not pliable. Surface even and smooth. Back medium to long in length.

Objections: Narrow, crease over spine easily noticeable behind shoulders; swayed or very humped back (wagon wheel), weak or mushy. Straight back.

Heirloom or Heritage hogs width averages the same from shoulder to rump. Pressing on the hogs' back should feel firm. Pliable could mean poor diet and/or a hog that retains too much fat. The back must not be so long that the sow/gilt cannot support the weight of the boar when breeding. Excessively long backs are weak and will shorten the productive life of the hog.

Sides and Ribs: sides should be deep and full with long strong ribs sprung in proportion to the width of the shoulders and hams.

Objections: shallow, narrow, flabby.

Belly and Flank: smooth and full and carried out in line with the sides. Flat, even underline.

Objections: Narrow, drawn in or pulled up, sagging or flabby.

The lower edge of the flank should be shaped like and inverted V. Experienced breeders say this is an indicator of good milking ability. A boar with this flank conformation will produce female offspring with good milking ability.

Hams and Rump: Hams should be large and solid. Full, firm, well-muscled with good width and coming well down to the hock. Full in crotch. Rump should have a slightly rounded slope from loin to the base of the tail. Filled out well around tail.

Objections: Long narrow hams or short thin hams not extending well down to hock. High crotch. Rump narrow, flat or too steep.

Tail: Attached as the hip falls off from the back. Well attached with thick root, good brush.

Objections: Too thick or too thin. Very long or very short. No lumps, bumps, crooks, or bends other than normal tail curl.

A low tail set also known as steep rump indicates the hog will eventually have joint issues because the joints are not positioned optimally for fluid movement. Eventually there will be issues with breeding because the legs are not positioned properly.

A sow with steep rump will have birthing problems possibly because the pelvis is mal-positioned and does not allow a straight shot through the birth canal. The same can be said of a tail set that is too high. (known as short backed)

A tightly curled tail is an indicator of good health. Limp tails suggest that something is amiss.

Legs and Feet: Strong with good bone, straight, nicely tapered. Front and back legs set wide apart and well under the hog. Pasterns strong. Feet firm and tough. Toes balanced, of equal size and appearance, straight. Hooves- Black preferred with striped or dark brown acceptable. Hog should not appear to be standing on tiptoes nor be rocked back onto pasterns. Dew claws off the ground when on firm ground.

Objections: Legs extremely long or very short. Thin legs. Crooked-knocked kneed or pigeon toed. Legs as large below the knee/hock as above. Legs set too close together. "Post legged" front legs. (straight, stiff, no give to the pasterns) Splayed or crooked toes, of unequal size, twisted, or overly long.

Legs and feet must support hundreds of pounds in normal daily activity and for breeding. Legs must be solid, thick and straight boned and set well apart on the four corners of the body to support the weight. Toes should sit firmly on the ground and each with the same appearance.

Coat: Moderately thick, smooth or curly, covering the body well.

Objections: Hair coarse, harsh, frizzy, rough and not covering the body evenly. Swirls anywhere on the hair coat.

Sparse areas in hair coat could be indication of illness or parasites. Frizzy or rough could be an indication of poor diet or digestion problems. Swirls or cowlicks or hair growing in different directions on the body.

Color: A shade of red from reddish golden yellow to almost black. Solid color. A limited number of small nickel sized dark or black skin patches acceptable.

Objections: Any color other than red.

NOTE: Horizontal stripes or spots of a darker color may be seen in newborns but should disappear within days or a few weeks.

Size: Large for age and condition. Averages: Boars 2 to 3 years and over: 700 to 800 lbs. Sows 2 to 3 years and over: 500 lbs. Piglets six months 230 to 250 lbs. These figures are based on animals in average or good condition.

Objections: Too small. Not thrifty.

These figures are for breeding hogs, not meat hogs or feeders. Over feeding breeding stock may result in infertility and injury.

Action and Style: Animated and vigorous with free easy movement.

Objections: Dull/stupid. Wobbling, stiff, awkward, limping.

Movement should be fluid and rhythmic. Without indication of poor bone structure.

Condition: Healthy. No signs of mange, scurf, lice, sores, scale. Well fleshed with good muscle tone. Tissue free from lumps and bumps.

Objections: Unhealthy, thin. Showing signs of disease or parasites. Hair dull, harsh.

Testicles: Easily seen and prominent with each of the same size and carriage. Scrotum well attached.

Objections: Only one testicle showing. Uneven carriage. Poorly attached "flabby" or low scrotum.

Scrotum should be large and well set back, indicating large testicles.

Teats: Minimum of 12 teats for sow and 12 for boar. Evenly spaced front to back and evenly paired down the line.

Objections: No blind, inverted, or pin teats on gilts, sows or boars. Teats on inside thigh are not counted.

There must be enough healthy teats to support each litter. Teats in boars are an inherited factor.

Disposition: Calm, quiet and gentle. Easily handled and driven.

Objections: Wild, vicious or stubborn.

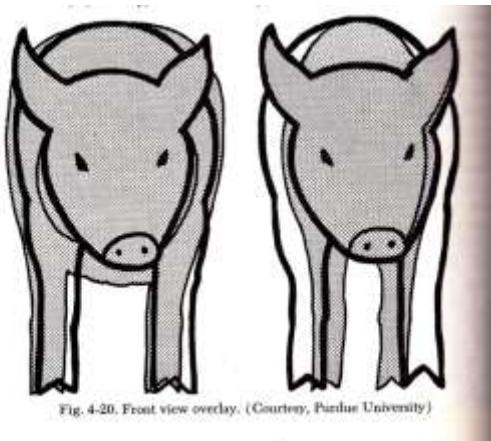


Fig. 4-20. Front view overlay. (Courtesy, Purdue University)

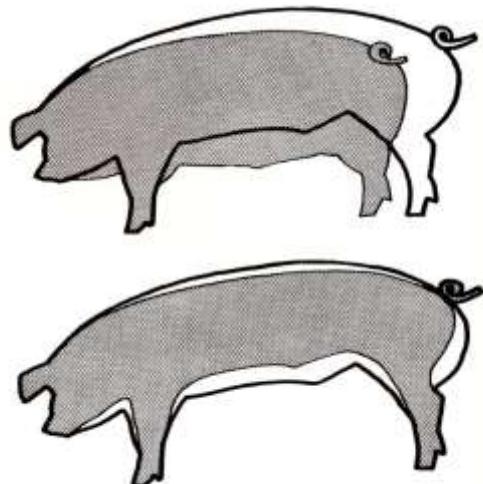


Fig. 4-24. Side view overlay. (Courtesy, Purdue University)

*Old Fashioned/heirloom
Shaded*

*Modern hog
Shaded*

*Top shaded hog, old fashioned, heirloom
Bottom shaded hog, modern*

These standards are meant to be used as teaching tools for choosing breeding stock and improving your herd. There are no perfect hogs. Overall your breeding stock should be as close as possible to the breed standards, while working toward improving those qualities that are slightly less than desired. For example if you have a hog that has slightly different ears but looks great otherwise, breed to a mate with great ears. For most breeders it's difficult to judge if a young piglet will develop into breeding stock until they reach a minimum of several months of age. All breeders will have many more meat or feeder piglets and hogs than hogs that meet registration quality and are retained for breed stock. The average is from none per litter up to 1 or 2 that should be retained for breed stock.

Sources:

- Red Wattle Hog Association
- ALBC – How to pick a pig: written by Marjorie Bender as told by Josh Wendland
- ALBC – Jeannette Beranger
- Purdue University: Swine production
- University of Kentucky: Swine production
- Swine by William Dietrich, Sanders Publishing (1910) pg 53 Fate or Lard Hogs for Breeding, and pg. 63 Bacon hogs for Breeding.
- Swine Science by Ensminger & Parker, Interstate Publishing (1984) pgs 50-51. Breeding Swine Scorecard