

Pig Owner's News for the

Hunter



Pig Breeds

November 2021

There are currently nine pure breeds of pigs in Australia. Most pigs used in commercial production are Large White, Landrace and Duroc breeds or crossbreeds of these breeds. Breed is chosen based on traits such as growth rates, litter size, temperament and carcase quality.

All the breeds were originally imported into Australia. However, for biosecurity reasons there are no imports of live pigs or pig semen permitted into Australia today. The Australian Pig Breeders Association provides registration services, produces a herd book, administers memberships and promotes pure breed pigs.

With free range production becoming more popular, many other breeds are considered more suitable due to their ability to do well outdoors. There is also a niche market for some of these breeds based on different carcase qualities such as finer grained meat, better taste and more intramuscular fat.

When deciding on which breed will be most suitable, there are several factors to consider. However, regardless of which breed you choose, some pigs will always do better than others and there will always be variation within each breed. Management, nutrition and housing also have a significant influence on pig performance. Pigs that have been born and raised outdoors will mostly cope better within that environment than pigs born and raised indoors. Those raised indoors need to learn to adapt to temperature changes and the seeking of shade and shelter. Young pigs will adapt more quickly. All pigs can suffer from heat stress, but white pigs are more prone to sunburn than coloured pigs.

Pigs should be purchased directly from breeders with a high herd health status. Avoid purchasing pigs with obvious deformities or behavioural issues.



Landrace – White haired with lop ears. Breed originally developed in Denmark. Imported from 1959 until 1973. Most came from Great Britain and New Zealand. Noted for their ability to farrow (give birth) unassisted and raise large litters.

Tamworth – Golden or red haired with erect ears. Originally came from Great Britain. They are hardy and suited to outdoor production. Excellent mothers but their progeny are slow growing compared to other breeds. The piglets are vigorous and usually all survive.



Large Black – Black hair with lop ears. Originated in England. Usually crossed with other breeds for pork production as they tend to get very fat.

Berkshire – Black with white face, feet and tip of tail with erect ears. They are hardy and docile. Popular with outdoor producers. They are the oldest registered breed in the world.



Large White – White haired with erect ears. Originally came from England. Commonly crossed with Landrace.

Wessex Saddlebacks – Black with a continuous belt of white over the forelegs and shoulders and lop ears. They have a docile nature, are good foragers and excellent mothers.



Hampshire – Black with a continuous belt of white over forelegs and shoulders and erect ears. They are an American breed. Used as a terminal sire in cross breeding programs.

Duroc – Mahogany red, golden red or chocolate with small lop ears. Used in cross breeding with large white or Landrace. Better as a terminal sire. Not a good maternal sire. Originated in the United States. Imported in 1981 from Canada and New Zealand.



Welsh – Generally yellow-white, but some are spotted black and white.

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