

Hog Feed at the Snake River Farm Minnesota

Dear Customers, Neighbors and Friends

This is the letter about pig feed that I have promised.

In this letter, I will explain what we have been feeding hogs in recent years and why.

Perhaps more important, I will tell you about a new feed blend that I will be using with one group of hogs this year.

The standard ration for hogs in the US is corn and soybean meal.

Corn is high in energy but low in protein. Only about 8% protein.

That protein level is much too low for young animals. Little pigs require 20% protein or higher.

That requirement tapers down as the hogs grow. By the time growing hogs reach 250 pounds they require about 12% protein.

Soy bean meal is a protein supplement. It is about 44% protein.

Virtually all hogs raised in the US are fed a blend of corn and soy bean meal adjusted to supply the correct protein for the pig's weight. Plus antibiotics and lots of other stuff.

By the way, the same basic diet of corn and soy bean meal is fed to poultry and to cattle in feedlots.

There are other additives of course. For example, "decontaminated" animal parts.

If we are what we eat, most people are corn. It is in everything.

I grind and mix the feed for our pigs at the farm. I do that for a number of reasons.

1. To know exactly what they are eating.
2. To know what they are NOT being fed. No antibiotic. No other additives.
3. To control the mix of ingredients to best supplement the food our pigs find in their pastures.
4. To control the amount of feed they eat to slow down growth. Yes, to slow growth.
5. To hold down feed costs.

We purchase the grain we use locally, from the Clear Lake Farmers Elevator, a co-op.

The grains I buy are "bin run." Not organic.

Organic feed would more than double the price of our pork.

I use a blend of oats, corn and soy bean meal which I developed several years ago.

Oats is not genetically modified

Both corn and soy beans are genetically modified. A high percentage of the corn and soy meal I buy is probably GM.

Oats are not normally used in pig feed because oats are only half as energy dense as corn.

Oats are a bulky, high fiber feed.

Our hog feed is almost 50% oats.

We feed oats to our hogs for some of the same reasons you and I eat oats.

The high fiber feed slows down the rate of fattening. I think that is good.

It seems to make the animals feel better. They play and run even when they grow to 500 pounds.

Oats have more protein than corn (11.5%) and oats have higher quality proteins than corn.

That means I can feed less soy bean meal.

It also means the animals have a much healthier diet.

The results have been quite good.

Of course the pigs also eat a lot of green plants, roots and anything else they find while digging in their pastures.

The animals grow well, stay healthy, live a good life consistent with their nature and produce excellent meat.

I pasture hogs in groups of 25 to 35. I believe they socialize better and live with lower stress in small groups.

This year I will grow one group of pigs on a new diet of oats and wheat.

Wheat is more energy dense than oats and higher in protein. Wheat is over 14% protein.

Wheat is also not genetically modified.

I will still need to feed a small amount of soybean meal when the pigs are small.

The great majority of their feed will be organic. Oats, wheat and all the things they find in their pastures.

Some of you are gluten intolerant.

Gluten is produced in wheat.

When digested, gluten is broken down into simple factors (sugars mainly).

There is no known possibility that gluten fed to pigs will affect a gluten intolerant person.

Nevertheless, if any of you prefer hogs from one group of the other, let me know.

I will of course give priority to anyone with a medical condition.

I am confident that this oat and wheat ration will work out well.

There is a considerable amount of recent research supporting it.

If results are as expected, I will probably switch all hogs to the wheat ration in future years.

Please respond to me with any questions you have.

Best regards.

Tom

p.s. We brought over 100 little pigs home yesterday.

They are doing grand.

Gail posted a neat video on our face book page, "Snake River Farm Minnesota". Check it out. You will enjoy it.

p.p.s. This message and all other messages that I have sent this year are on Sarah's blog page at www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com

p.p.p.s. Visit Sarah's Blog to read about the "Miracle Balm" that she and Cecilee have made from tallow. Everyone who uses it loves it.