

Poland China Pigs.



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These pigs are part of a group of seventeen that we bought from a Wisconsin farmer. They are an experiment.

In the photo, they are eating grasses and clovers. Immediately after they eat the foliage, they will dig for worms and other tasty morsels.

Of course, all of our pigs live and grow in pastures.

The experiment part is that these are a different breed of pigs from a different source.

Their black bodies with white legs and markings are typical of this heritage breed. The proper breed name is Poland China but most farmers refer to them as “Polands.” The breed originated in Ohio, about 1816.

It is the oldest hog breed developed in America.

The Polands were developed by selecting and cross breeding animals from four lines. The Berkshire, the Hampshire, the Polish and Big Chinas. Berkshires and Hampshires came from England as their names indicate.

Polands are a fast growing and large breed. The largest pig known was a Poland boar (male) named Big Bill. Big Bill weighed an incredible 2552 pounds. That is close to the weight of the largest draft horse or the largest bison bull.

Small farmers like us, find it harder each year to locate good baby pigs. That is primarily because farms continue to consolidate into larger units. Almost all hogs, like poultry, are now raised in confinement. More than anything else, confinement is a form of automation. In confinement, each farm worker can raise many thousands of animals. That reduces the cost of food. Although

automation produces cheap food, there are environmental, animal welfare, human welfare and food quality issues with confinement.

In addition, confinement cuts off commerce between farmers. Confinement animals are under contract to large food chains. Contracted animals are seldom available to other farmers.

Gail and I are happy to have found the Wisconsin farmer who farrowed (birthed) these pigs. He cares for his hogs in the old ways. The ways that we prefer. Among many other things, the animals are in outdoor pens.

Next year he has agreed to produce 60 little pigs for us.

If that goes well, we may get all of our piglets from this Wisconsin farm.

By the way, Poland China pigs were introduced into China in the 1920s. They did not do well in that climate.

Best regards.

Tom