Red Wattle Hog Association

2017 Winter Newsletter

The RWHA Board of Directors from Nov. 1, 2017 thru Oct. 31, 2018 is as follows:

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Board Member at Large- Karen Doyle- White Stone, VA 22578. 804-435-9403.
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Congratulations and thank you to everyone on the board for volunteering your time.
Should you have questions or need assistance please feel free to contact a board member.

On Jan. 1, 2018 the RWHA will begin accepting renewal memberships for the membership year starting April 1, 2018 going thru March 31, 2019. All RWHA memberships are annual and must be renewed to keep RWHA privileges. Current memberships will expire at end of day March 31, 2018. Please mark your calendars so you don't forget. We do not send out reminders. Membership applications can be found on the website at redwattleproject.org. Click the RWHA tab and the next screen has any form you will need. The RWHA accepts printed and mailed forms along with the fee, or you can use Pay Pal that is on that same screen. You do not need to do both. If you use Pay Pal, be sure that we also have your telephone number(s) if you want it listed under our membership information. Please print or write legibly on the application. Information provided on the application or with Pay Pal is for keeping our records up to date and for others to contact you. If changes need to be made, please make a board member aware.

The RWHA is still offering free DNA to our members until end of day March 31, 2018. You can have one registered boar and one registered sow or gilt free of charge. Our testing is done thru UC Davis. Instructions are on our website in the tutorial section. If you need assistance please let us know. This is a great way to have more genetic information for our hogs to build their futures on, and a great avenue for marketing your hogs. Who passes up a great free thing? I hope not you.

There have been issues lately with RWHA rules and breed standards. Please review and become familiar with them. They are in place to protect the breed, the breeder, and the potential breeder. As a courtesy you should inform your customers of a few rules and breed standards and direct them to our website. This is the best opportunity for you to make a good impression. You want them to succeed so be as helpful as possible.

In order to keep correct statistics it's very important that the registration applications be filled out correctly. Other than your registration this also gives us information on litter sizes, typical breed standards, birth defects and much more. Please do your best to fill in the information as correctly as possible. Use additional paper if necessary. We all have problems at some point. If you haven't, you will. Smaller or larger than average litter numbers, too many runts, birth defects, farrowing or nursing problems or whatever. The information provided by you as breeders will help us know if there are patterns to problems and how to address them and will help you as breeders in the future. The most important issue is to assure our hog is successful and to do that we need your help. All information is always kept confidential.

The RWHA has a face book site for RWHA members and non-members. It's a good place to discuss topics, get to know other breeders, share information, get help, and even brag. We love those baby pictures. We keep it closed to discourage spammers but all you need to do is ask for membership on the site. Go to google and type in Red Wattle Hog Association face book. You'll find us there. We'd love for you to join us.

Please report any registered hog that is no longer in production for any reason. Death, injury, retired, or sold without registration following the hog. This helps the RWHA and The Livestock Conservancy keep records to know where Red Wattles are in population. We don't know when a hog is no longer producing unless you make us aware. Please do your part. You can contact any board member with the information.

Wolf teeth, needle teeth, incisors or canines. No matter what name is used they're all the same. Piglets are born with 8 of them and they're sharp. They can cut up faces and ears of their littermates and injure the sows teats severely. Due to other more serious complications it's not usually recommended to clip these teeth unless there are serious problems. Incorrect clipping can lead to infection going to the brain and most likely a painful death. Cut faces and ears and will heal and become battle scars to brag about. Savaged nipples or teats are another matter if the sow is so cut and tender she has problems nursing. She may not allow her piglets to nurse, jeopardizing their health and causing her milk supply to dry up. She may develop infections or the teats may become permanently damaged so she can't nurse future litters properly. Watch the condition of your sow's teats. You may see cuts and probably will, but if there's a problem you'll see her pull back from nursing and maybe even refuse to nurse. Take appropriate action at that time.

Tusks. Boars are born with them. They're also canine teeth and they continue to grow throughout life. They're kept sharp by rubbing against the upper canines. No matter how friendly the boar is everyone should use caution. Even if they haven't shown themselves yet because of age, they're still there and they can hurt you. Tusks are razor sharp and a friendly nod or turn of the head could mean a trip to the emergency room for you. Tusks can be cut back or removed but it's rare and can be dangerous for you and the boar.

Tail docking. This practice is done mostly in confinement facilities to keep injuries at a minimum. When hogs are stressed they lash out at the nearest thing which is usually another hog. Hogs will go for tails and ears first. Docking the tails eliminates that problem. If not done properly there can be damage to the nerves in the anal area creating waste elimination problems. Tail docking is not usually done on farms and is seen as unnecessary. You may see some damage, you may even loose a tail, but it's a rare occurrence.

Tails are a good indicator of health besides all the other check lists you as a breeder should be using. Curled tails usually indicate the hog is happy and healthy. Hogs will straighten their tails when they're under stress. The stress may be as simple as a stranger nearby, or as serious as illness, injury, poor nutrition, lack of good water sources, or too close confinement. There can be many reasons you'll see a straightened tail and most are not serious. If a hog senses the stranger is not a threat the tail will curl again, or go back and forth. Sometimes they straighten for a few seconds or minutes when they're deep in thought or watching their neighborhood. All this is normal. Your clue that something is amiss is when the tail remains straight for a longer period of time. Is the area overcrowded? Is the diet providing good nourishment? Are there signs of illness or injury? Your hog is trying to tell you something with a straight tail that remains straight for extended periods. Pay attention and address the issue(s).

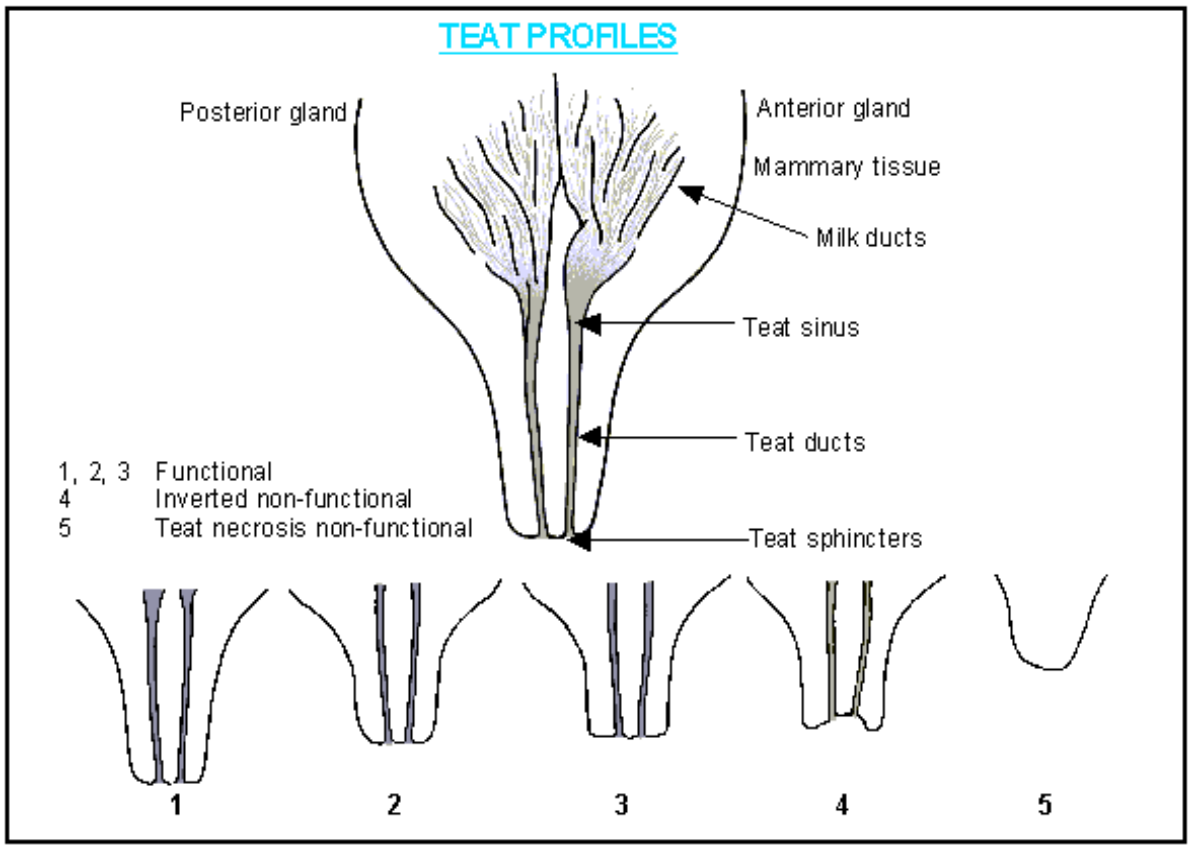
Fun Facts

Hogs can run up to 30 miles per hour.
They can drink up to 14 gallons of water per day.
They're good swimmers. They were often passengers on ancient ships at ocean. It was believed once released in the water they would swim toward the nearest shore.
They're very intelligent, being the fourth smartest animal on earth. Smarter than a dog. They can learn their names as early as 2 weeks old.
They are associated with fertility in the Chinese and Egyptian cultures.
They have 15,000 taste buds in comparison to 9,000 in humans. Is it any wonder they love their food?

Teat Structure and why inspection is important

Figures 1,2,3 appear to be normal and should be functional. Figure 4: If the teat sphincter cannot be seen at eye level it is likely that such a teat will remain inverted and will not be functional. This is important to appreciate when selecting or receiving a gilt for breeding. Some inverted nipples will become more normal and be functional when the mammary gland develops but when selecting you cannot take the chance. Figure 5 should never be counted as a teat.

Note that each teat has two orifices and teat ducts which drain two quite separate mammary glands, front (anterior) and back (posterior).



(Fig.1-7)

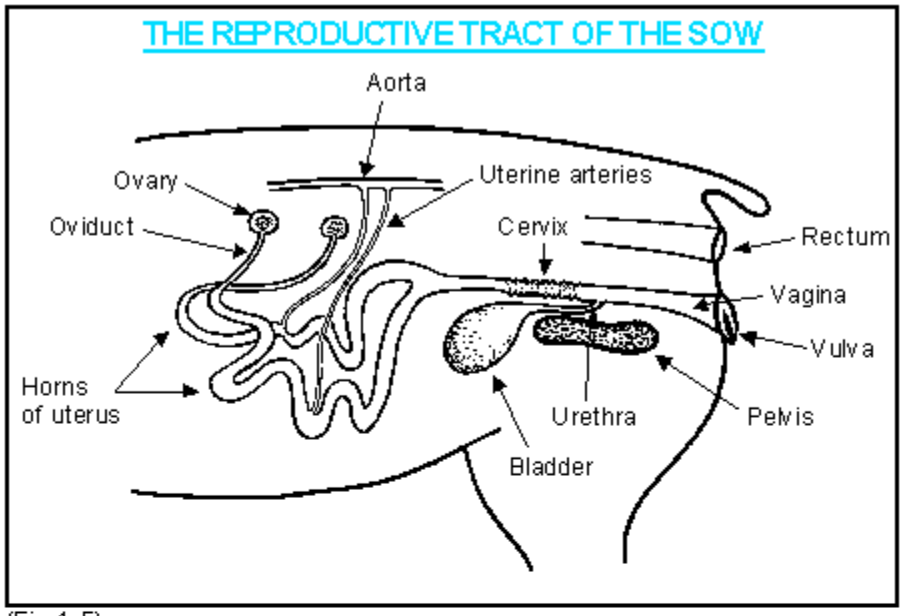
Most hog associations including the RWHA require a minimum of twelve (12) evenly spaced teats in both boars and gilts that appear they would function normally when needed. Teats are inherited so boars must be included even though they do not produce milk or nurse young. The number is selected to allow the sow to nurse all or most litters without competition. Evenly spaced is used to allow room for the proper functioning of the teat. Now imagine this teat full of milk. Evenly spaced is for this reason. There's much more going on in the teat than is visible to the eye.

This guide also helps to show nipple or teat forms. Becoming familiar with them when selecting your breeding stock will help you in the future. #5, Teat necrosis or non-functional is usually called a blind teat. They can be placed anywhere along the teat line but are found more often as the last in line near the inner thighs. They should never be counted as functional teats. They will not ever produce nourishment (milk for their young).

Teat injury is fairly common and can cause the teat to become non-functioning. It's not a reason to remove the hog from registration or to cull for freezer camp, but does show another reason why an initial minimum of 12 is wise and necessary.

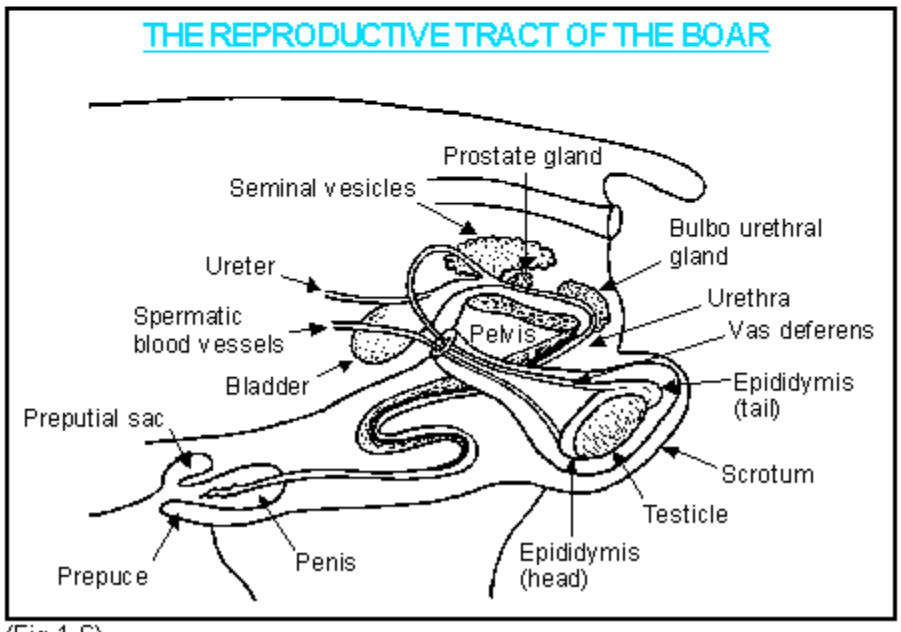
Reproductive System

(22) Fig.1-5 and Fig.1-6 show the anatomy of the reproductive tracts of the sow and the boar.



(Fig.1-5)

There's a lot going on internally. Organs, bone and muscle must be in the proper place to work optimally. As a breeder it's your responsibility to choose breeding stock that best fit the breed standards. They will help in avoiding fertility, farrowing and break down problems.



(Fig.1-6)

These diagrams show where reproductive organs of both the sow and boar should be to function properly. You can easily see how important it can be for the gilt, sow or boar to be of like size and on level ground for breeding. A variance can mean the penis enters the bladder rather than the cervix. The cervix contracts to bring the semen to the uterus for fertilization but if the ejaculate is in the bladder it's not possible. Fertility problems are not always due to the gilt, sow or boar. They act on instinct. Sometimes the problems are due to the choices we as breeders make.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the protection against biological agents. You know them as germs, bacteria, viruses or microscopic bugs that are contagious and cause illness and even death. Most diseases are spread by saliva, manure, urine, blood or exhaled air. These are on our farms naturally meaning disease and infection can be easily carried from place to place, from other farms or any area where animals are or have been, and to and from your isolation areas. Disease can be transmitted by the animals themselves, rodents, birds, insects, vehicles, equipment, and people.

Protecting your farm and animals can be an easy, quick and inexpensive process. It's much easier than the worry and work of battling illnesses and the financial losses you could experience.

- Isolate any new animal coming to live with you. The recommended minimal time is 30 days. Isolation means separation in a permanent designated area, away from other livestock that may come in contact with the animal, its saliva, urine or feces. This is a good time to treat for parasites such as worms, lice and mites that could also carry disease. Care should be taken with shoes, boots or equipment used during the isolation period to avoid the possibility of spreading contaminates to other animals in your care.
- Disinfection. There are a few recommended methods and products and all are easy, quick and inexpensive.
  1.) One gallon sprayer
  2.) Bleach, or Vinegar, or Hydrogen Peroxide
  3.) Water

Mix 10% bleach with 90% water in a hand pump sprayer and lightly spray grounds where your animals live. Bleach is a skin irritant and also produces noxious fumes. Do not mix or combine with anything other than water. Do not over spray to produce mud. Do not use indoors or in an enclosed area. Do not spray in or around water sources or mud holes where run off could be ingested. Do not directly spray animals. Bleach has a short effective shelf life so do not mix more than you'll use in your application. It will not be as effective after storage. Tests confirm that a higher bleach concentration of 10% does not increase effectiveness. This is not a case of More is Better.

Mix half vinegar to half water in a hand pump sprayer, 50% to 50%, and treat grounds as described above for bleach application. Vinegar should not produce skin irritants or dangerous fumes and can be used in enclosed areas. Vinegar types have different concentrations and its best to use the highest concentration if possible. Commonly found white vinegar has a concentration of 5% and can effectively eliminate about 80% of germs. Pickling Vinegar has the highest concentration if it can be found.

Hydrogen Peroxide is also effective and is sometimes used after the application of vinegar. The mix is half hydrogen peroxide to half water and treat living areas the same as with vinegar applications. The cost may be prohibitive for larger areas but can work well for isolation.

There are herbal and essential oil treatments as well however for larger applications they're cost prohibitive. Their effectiveness has not been determined at this time. They are better used individually as needed and some can be quite effective for the treatment of illness or injury.

In addition to living areas for your animals you should also treat anything that could come in contact such as vehicles, equipment, shoes and boots. Tires on vehicles should be liberally sprayed before entering. Disinfect your own and visitor shoes or boots or use sterile shoe covers. Illnesses and infection are commonly spread by footwear bringing the infectious contaminates in.

There are too many germ producing illness and infections to list here for reasons why good biosecurity is important. A few you might recognize are:

- Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea-PED, caused by a coronavirus. With young piglets the mortality rate is high. It's extremely contagious. Older exposed hogs usually develop an immunity and are not affected. PED causes wasting, dehydration, diarrhea and death. This disease severely crippled the hog industry 2 and 3 years ago with the loss of young piglets. It was reported the virus was even found in gas station parking lots where hog haulers pulled in for fuel and in pay stations where it was transferred by foot traffic. This virus is carried in to your herd.
- Pneumonia. Caused by a respiratory virus that's very common and difficult to treat and control. It can be highly contagious. Mortality rate can be swift and high. These viruses are often carried into your herd.
- Porcine Parvovirus Infection-PPV, commonly called Parvo. Hogs are carriers. You may not ever see an outbreak but it's believed the virus is commonly found on almost every farm in the country. It affects fertility and can be found in both males and females and is often sexually transmitted but is also found in the ground and has a long lifespan. You can read more about this virus in the RWHA tutorial section.
- Erysipeas. Hogs are natural carriers in their tonsils. This disease may be mild and not noticed, or it can be severe and deadly. There is no known reason why Erysipeas surfaces but stress and unclean conditions are thought to be contributing factors. There's more on this disease on our tutorial.
- Greasy Pig Disease. Caused by the staphylococcus hyicus bacteria that normally lives on the skin of hogs. Hogs are natural carriers. It's usually passed from the sow to nursing piglets and spread by contact thru eyes, ears, nose and open wounds such as scratches from playful fights, and from inappropriately clipped teeth. It affects the kidneys and liver and can result in infectious sores and even death. There is no known reason why the disease suddenly appears however it's believed that stress, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions are major contributing factors.
- Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome. PRRS. Also known as Mystery Disease or Blue Ear Disease. Caused by a virus. PRRS affects and multiplies in the lungs killing the hogs natural immunity defenses, allowing other infections and diseases to take over. Can be devastating to herds. Spread by nasal secretions, saliva, feces, urine and can be airborne up to 2 miles. Infected adults are infectious for approximately 14 days. Growing hogs can be infectious up to 2 months. Can infect the fetus resulting in late term abortions, stillbirth and mummies. Symptoms may include lack of appetite, temperature, late term abortions, ear discoloration, early farrowing, coughing and lethargy. The hog(s) may present with all or none of these symptoms and each can be only for a brief time, usually one to two days. Once infected and if recovered the hog is usually immune however may not be as thrifty.

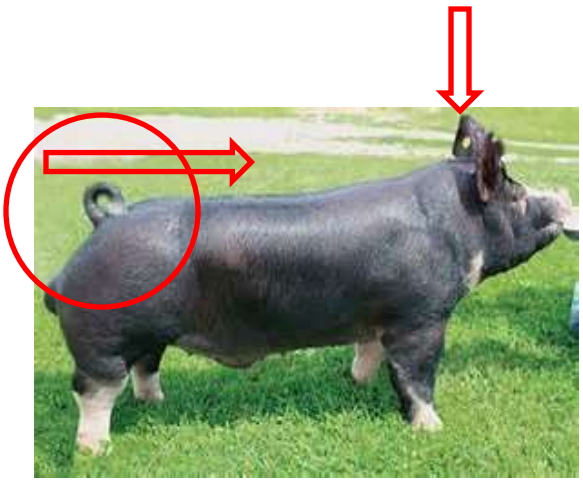
Change is stressful to animals if you're adding to your herd. There's new people, new environment, new feed and new animals to get used to. It's also stressful to the animals of an existing herd that's forced to accept a stranger. Not all but many diseases are opportunistic meaning they strike when conditions are just right and if the hog is a carrier it can bring about an epidemic. Stress can make those conditions favorable. This is another reason why isolation is necessary. Isolation allows the animal(s) to adjust slowly to their new living arrangement and allows you to monitor and treat more easily if needed without the worry and distraction of your other animals.

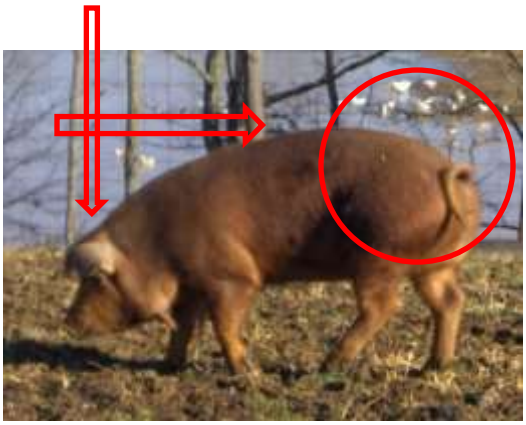
There are other stressful conditions to monitor such as inadequate feed- (not enough or not nutritious), lack of sufficient clean water, overcrowding, parasites, extreme temperatures, and dirty living areas to name a few. When the body is stressed the immune system is lowered.

Rodents, insects and birds also contribute to the spread of infection by crossing your property. They all can carry disease within or on their bodies and spread contaminates thru the elimination of saliva, urine and feces, or by walking through the area. They may have internal or external parasites that carry disease. It's impossible to control their movement but you can control what they leave behind by practicing good biosecurity.

Many illnesses can be carried in by visitors, vehicles and even you. It's important to you, your herd and your financial investment to develop good biosecurity practices. With saliva, urine and feces prevalent on farms it's import to develop and maintain good biosecurity practices. Sometimes it isn't practical in large woods and pasture however you should treat their gathering areas such as feeding stations and sleeping areas. Block out some time regularly on your calendar to get it done. Once a month is recommended, but more often if there are stressful situations occurring or if problems are noticed.

Many harmful biological agents are already on your farm and live on or in your hogs as the course of nature. You can help avoid or control any outbreaks by using good practices. It's ironic to say overcrowding is a contributor when hogs are herding animals that live in groups. It's also odd to say we should control cleanliness when the hogs breathe in and exhale, spit and drool, pee, poop, eat, drink and sleep in the same areas. This is why it's important to monitor the conditions of your hogs. If there's a change you should investigate and make necessary changes quickly. An effective and proven way to assure the good health of your hogs to the best of your ability is to practice good biosecurity. An initial investment of a pump sprayer usually costing less than $10.00 and a bottle of bleach or vinegar plus a few minutes of your time might help save your herd and you.





As you can see, all hog breeds develop differently. These differences are what make them unique and also what helps them survive and thrive. It's important to know the structure and conformity of your breed. The easiest to see in these pictures is the tail set. It's not just for looks. The tail set indicates where the internal organs are. Without being properly placed for the breed there can be numerous problems. There can be fertility and or farrowing problems as well as digestive and waste elimination problems. Muscle, tendon, cartilage, and bone structure will also be effected which may cause the hog to break down early in life. You can avoid many problems in the future by selecting breeding hogs with the proper tail placement.

Berkshire hog tail sets are much higher than Red Wattle. It works for them. Red Wattle tail sets are lower, as the rounded end of the rump ends. Proper placement assures that all the internal workings are where they should be to function optimally.

Legs are also very important. Red Wattles are broad hogs and they get big and heavy. Their legs must be properly placed and strong enough to support that weight. Your breeding stock should have wide set legs in both the front and rear. They should be thick, strong and straight and placed on the four corners of the body. That width is also a good indicator of good bone and muscle structure in the pelvic region for farrowing. Dew claws should be off the ground when on flat solid surfaces. This is another indication of strong legs and feet.

Red Wattles also have a slight arch toward their rear or rump. Their backs are not flat as you can see in the picture difference with a Berkshire. Both breeds have flat underlines or bellies. These are also indicators of the internal workings, organs, muscle and bone being where they should be for your breed and optimal performance.

There's much more to list about Red Wattle breed standards but hopefully you can see why it's important to know your breed standards and put them into practice. They're more than a red hog with wattles and by knowing how and why their bodies work you can be a successful breeder.

I have to throw this in too. Look at the difference in ears. Although ears are not a breed health issue please remember that Red Wattle ears do not stand up. You may get them in your litters but they are NOT breed standard for registration.

Diet

Just like anything else that eats to survive, a pig can overeat and become unhealthy. It's important to not only monitor food amount, but also content. A diet high in carbohydrates such as bakery goods will pack on weight fast but it will mostly consist of fat. Do you want that for your breeder hogs and pork product business? Pigs are very much like humans. They need a varied healthy diet to assure good health and longevity and to also give us the best pork products they're capable of producing. Overweight hogs also have fertility problems for both the female and male. Even with good structure, overweight hogs can have mobility problems causing the hips, legs and feet to break down. They become even more lazy creating a cycle of packing on fat to become more lazy. Red Wattles get big and broad. Sometimes it's difficult to know if there are weight problems. This is another area where watching and knowing your hogs will help you. Working with your county extension office or state agricultural college will help you develop a healthy feeding program.

Choosing Replacement Breeding Stock (part one)

By Theresa Schieffelbein

Your first Red Wattles will always be special, and if you are like me you will think of every conceivable reason to keep them around. The reality of it though is that you will need to replace them at some point. We all know and every expert will attest that the best thing for the long term breed health and your reputation as a breeder is that only the best of the best should be bred.

There are several factors to consider when deciding on which gilts are worthy of the honor of breeding. The first of these is looks. I always look from the bottom up because although I am not an "expert", I believe that if you build something the foundation is the key. So after eliminating those that do not comply with the breed standards, I start there. From the foundation up.

Choose toes that are even in shape and size with a less than ½ in. difference. If the toes are too small or too close together the hog will have difficulty carrying its weight as it ages. If the toes are uneven and too spread apart it will have the tendency to be sore when walking in adulthood and in their pregnancy. This, as any pregnant woman who has ever had swollen feet will tell you makes them not as inclined to walk even to get food and water. This intensifies the older the hog gets to be. Feet that are not correct have the same effect as wearing shoes that are 3 sizes too small for the rest of your life. You just know that you are going to have problems and if you breed these hogs you have invited an inheritable trait into your herd. It's much easier to start eliminating this trait right from the beginning. You should also check the actual toes for white vertical lines which are prone to cracking, as well as longer dew claws. The dew claws should not touch the ground but be held above the ground.

I look for strong, stout legs that do not bow or buckle. Buck kneed animals have very straight front legs with knees that buck forward. Legs that are less substantial have a greater chance of being injured when being mounted by a boar or rough housed with the herd. Injuries can lead to arthritis and eventual lameness. Lameness due to injury is one thing but choosing an animal to breed that has less than stout legs is just adding to your chances of a herd that carries this tendency.

Post legged hogs will have an angle to the rear leg (hip, stifle and hock as one unit), that is greater than it should be. The leg will appear straighter than usual. You will notice that the gait is a bit choppier or stiff, than the other hogs. These hogs should also be sent to the feeder pen.

The gait of the hog should appear normal. If the hog is a bit narrower in the distance between both the front and hind legs the hips may appear to sway with more exaggeration than others. It is hard to describe but think of a runway model and their exaggerated hip movement….this is a structural defect and you should send them to the feeder pen. My husband said this is NOT a defect in runway models.

Your breeding stock is the foundation of your herd and of your reputation. No matter how ideal your animals are, no matter how much attention that you give to details of their structure and no matter how careful you are to do things correctly, you will still have hogs that don't make the grade. This happens to everyone but you need to keep in mind the long range idea that no matter what you have now, you have a goal that you wish to reach. That goal should be to have each generation better than the former one. This is not easy but if you start with the best of the best you can do this and leave the breed a litter better for your efforts.

This research includes contact with the Universities of Minnesota, Oklahoma, and a veterinarian who specializes in swine.

I will continue to type up my notes and share them with you in the next newsletter.