Raising a Pig for Meat

By Cindy Einspahr, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Adams County

Raising a few pigs at home can be a fun family project or 4H youth project, and can produce fresh meat for your freezer. Raising one hog twice a year will produce enough meat for a family of four.

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Shelter and Fencing
Plan ahead before you bring a pig home. Pigs need protection. In warm weather, they need a place that is dry and protected from the sun. In cold weather, pigs also need a dry place that is protected from the cold and wind. Size the pen to accommodate the pig as it grows. Pigs need enough space to move around comfortably.

If you keep pigs outside, be sure to provide a shelter for protection from the sun. Pigs have sweat glands on their snouts only, and will sunburn and overheat quickly. You may start out with a nice white hog but it will soon turn pink in the sun!

Fencing for pigs is an important consideration. You may use a permanent, woven wire fence with a board around the bottom to discourage digging, or you can use temporary moveable electric fencing systems if you train the pigs to it. A moveable fencing system is nice because it allows you to move the pigs around so you can clean up manure and bedding.

Whatever housing and fence system you use, make sure it is pig tight and they cannot get out because they will escape if they can. Pigs are very intelligent animals, if there is a weak place in the pen, they will find it. My daughter’s pig got loose, ate my flowers and chased a delivery man. Catching a pig is not an easy task and is best avoided!

Water
A pig will drink about one to two gallons of water a day. Clean, fresh water should be available at all times. There are many types of automatic waterers available, or you can simply provide a tub of water. If a water tub is used, be sure to secure it firmly, as pigs will root under it and spill it. We just made a waterer out of PVC pipe, put a little nipple on the pipe, and closed up the end.

Buying a Pig
You’ll need to know these pig terms. A sow is a female that has had piglets. A gilt is a female that has not had piglets. A boar is an intact male, and a barrow is a castrated male. For a feeder pig, you will want a gilt or a barrow.

Pigs can be bought from a local breeder, sale barn, or my favorite, Craigslist! Expect to pay $1 per pound for each piglet.

Feeder pigs are purchased as weaned piglets at six to eight weeks old when they are cute little animals, weighing about 40 pounds. The hog should have already been dewormed. Piglets should look and be healthy and in good condition when purchased. Choose one with bright eyes, alert nature, and a healthy appetite. I use a dog crate to take my piglets home.

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**Food**
To reduce stress for your new pigs in the first few weeks, try to provide them with the same feed they were used to from their previous home. Introduce new feeds gradually by mixing the feeds until the pigs adjust. And you may want to consider medicated feed at the beginning to give your pig a good start. Medicated feed generally contains vitamins, probiotics, and minerals. Growing pigs need a well balanced diet that will supply the right amount of protein, energy, vitamins and minerals. The younger the pig the higher percentage of protein is required. Corn and soybeans can be a good source of protein. Young pigs, up to 77 pounds, need about 16% protein in their diet. On average, a 40 pound pig will eat 2.75 pounds of 16% protein feed per day and gain 1.10 pounds per day.

As the pig grows, it will require less protein. Pre-mixed feeds are available which provide for the needs of pigs at various stages of growth. They will be labeled Starter, Grower, and Finisher feed. I also feed table scraps, garden waste and other food waste, cookies, and candy, to my pigs. Never feed pigs raw meat though. But remember that food waste is just an extra treat. Pigs also need quality feed.

**Care**
All pigs have internal parasites, such as round worms, which must be controlled for the pig to grow and perform at its best. Young pigs are usually dewormed about one week after weaning and twice more at 30 day intervals. Treat for worms once at about 40-50 pounds and again at 100 pounds. It is important to read and follow the directions on the dewormer label. Also, don’t deworm too close to market.

Clean the pen frequently to help reduce the need for additional antibiotics and medication. Remember, pigs will stay clean if you let them, they aren’t dirty. They will designate an area for eating, sleeping, and manure. Keep the pen dry to reduce odors and clean it regularly. Also this will help cut down on flies. Always provide free choice feed and water.

When pigs reach six months of age and weigh around 220 to 280 lbs, they are ready for market. Be thinking about how you want to sell them. My brother does a private treaty and drops his pigs off at the local packaging plant. The consumer can tell the plant how to process the pig. Look for processing plants in the phone book. Make sure they are federally inspected.

Also think about what you will haul them in. You cannot just pick them up and put them is the back of the pickup. I put my pigs in my horse trailer to haul them.

I think keeping a pig is easy and enjoyable. If I can do it, anyone can!

**Resources:**
Raising Livestock, CSU Extension Adams County http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/Adams/sa/livestock.htm
Raising Pigs at Home, UMH Extension, http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/AGDLEP/docs/pigraise.pdf
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I will focus on three prolific weeds that you will be seeing come up soon in March and April, Kochia, Cheatgrass, and mustards.

Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) is an annual weed which typically germinates in March and flowers from July to September. Plants become tumbleweeds in fall and winter and the seeds are viable for two to three years. This weed is common in dryland and irrigated agricultural fields, rangeland, and road-sides. Treat it when its young! **Mechanical Treatment:** Young kochia plants can be browsed by livestock, tilled, and hand pulled. **Chemical Treatment:** Apply herbicide when plants are six inches tall or smaller. According to Larimer County Weed District, use dicamba (Vanquish, Banvel, and others) or Vista, or any of the many premixes of these products with 2,4-D (2,4-D alone will not control kochia because it has become resistant to it).

**Cheatgrass**, a.k.a. Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) is a winter annual weed. Grasses typically germinate in late summer or early fall, go through a semi-dormant state through winter, and are usually the first grass to green up in early spring (March and April). By June, these grasses have already set seed! At maturity, the prickly seedheads are a nuisance to livestock and pets. The thin dense dryed grass also becomes a fire hazard. Treat it when its young! **Mechanical Treatment:** Hand pulling or tillage will provide effective control if done prior to seed set (June). **Chemical Treatment:** Herbicides can control cheatgrass but timing and application rate is important so you don’t injure surrounding desired grasses. According to Larimer County

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Weed District, low rates of glyphosate (Roundup and others) applied in winter or early spring, when other perennial grasses are still dormant, can control cheatgrass with little or no injury to desired grasses.

**Blue mustard** (*chorispora tenella*) and **Flixweed** (*Descurainia sophia*) are annual weeds in the Mustard family. Flowers are 4-petaled, distinctive of the mustard family, and often have a pungent smell.

Blue mustard seedlings emerge in early spring (March and April) and flowers appear from May to July.

**Flixweed** is a winter annual and seedlings emerge November to June. Flowering occurs from March to August. Treat it when its young! **Mechanical Treatment:** Hand pulling or digging are effective treatments for annual species, but get them before they flower. **Chemical Treatment:** According to Larimer County Weed District, Escort, Plateau/Panoramic, and Telar provide excellent control of mustard species.

**Herbicide Cautions:** Always read the label, it’s the law. Labels will describe appropriate handling including mixing, application, grazing restrictions after spraying, spill control, and disposal.

**Reference:**
Reducing your Trash

By Irene Shonle, Director CSU Extension in Gilpin County

Recycling can reduce your trash load by up to 40%. In most places, newspaper, white paper, glass, aluminum/tin cans, plastics (types 1-7), and cardboard can be recycled.

Since glossy catalogues and magazines are not always accepted at recycling centers, reduce the number of catalogues that you don’t want by going to: www.dmachoice.org and registering your name on the do-not-mail list for free.

Household trash often contains up to 30% kitchen scraps and other compostable material, so composting is a way to get rid of one out of every three bags! Another advantage of composting is that your garbage will not stink so much. A surprising number of things can be diverted from your trash bag, including hair, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, toothpicks, egg shells, and dust.

Keeping an equal ratio of layered “green” (kitchen scraps) to “brown” (leaves and other carbon sources) is critical for fast, odor-free composting. If you don’t tend to have large quantities of leaves, supplement with items that might otherwise get tossed: egg cartons, newspaper, junk mail (except those darn glossy catalogues – they might have toxic inks), ripped up cereal boxes, toilet paper rolls, paper plates, shredded cardboard, etc.

One tip is to line your compost bucket with a few sheets of newspaper, and then put the peelings and vegetable trimmings from each meal into another sheet of paper, wrap it up and put it in the bucket. When emptying, the liner newspaper goes in the bin along with the meal “packets.” This automatically gives a pretty good green/brown ratio. Pine needles and wood ashes can be used in small quantities. You can use the resultant compost to improve the soil around your house. For more information on composting, go to: www.ext.colostate.edu/sam/compost.html or contact our office.

Even if you live in bear country, if compost piles are properly maintained, they will not be very susceptible to bear visits. If you live in bear country, never put fish, cooked foods, oils, dairy, meat, melon rinds, fruits and other pungent scraps in the pile. Keep it aerated, properly turned, with the 50/50 ratio of browns/greens and always cover new kitchen scraps with brown material to reduce odor. A smelly, anaerobic pile will attract bears. Adding lime or wood ash can reduce the odors, as will enclosed bins. You can also construct a bear-resistant enclosure for your composter using sturdy materials. However, if you live near persistent bears, either don’t compost, or enclose your compost pile with solar-powered electric fencing. Another tip is to reduce all other bear attractants in your yard such as garbage, pet food, bird feeders, etc., and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

If properly maintaining a compost pile sounds like too much work, you could just dig a hole or trench (12 - 24” deep is best), chopping and mixing your kitchen scraps with some soil, and adding 8” more soil on top. This can even work in winter, as long as you dig a big enough trench initially, since the ground will be frozen too hard to dig out more space later on. This type of composting may take a little longer (up to a year), but you don’t need to worry about the “green/brown” ratio, and there’s no further work. The pit or trench will eventually become a nicely-amended little spot of land that might end up covered with flowers like Continued on page 7
Reducing Trash continued from page 6

columbine that appreciate a little extra organic matter.

Another form of composting to consider is worm composting, which is done indoors. If well maintained, you can have a nice worm farm that will not only compost your scraps, but will provide a wonderful soil addition/fertilizer for your potted plants. For more information on worm composting: http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost/mrcworms.htm

Between recycling and composting, you can reduce up to 70% of your trash, not to mention reducing the strain on already overcrowded landfills.

How to Grow Blueberries in Colorado

By Joel Reich, Horticulture Specialist, Boulder County CSU Extension

Many Colorado gardeners have long lamented their inability to grow blueberries. The problem stems from the fact that most of Colorado’s soils are slightly to highly alkaline. This means that their pH value is somewhere above 7.0 (neutral). Blueberries and their relatives, such as rhododendrons and azaleas, must have acid soils in order to thrive. For instance, blueberries prefer a soil pH of about 5.5. Unfortunately, there is just no practical way to manage Colorado soils in order to produce a pH that low.

The good news for blueberry lovers is that, with a little extra effort, there is a way to grow delicious blueberries in your Colorado garden. The key to success is to plant the blueberry bushes in a medium that is primarily (or entirely) composed of sphagnum peat moss. This readily available material has a pH of approximately 5.5, so it is perfect for blueberries. Two further keys to success are: 1) make sure that the root zone always stays moist (even during warm, dry spells in winter), and 2) protect the bushes from dry, desiccating winds during the winter. This can be done by wrapping the bushes with burlap or old sheets while they are dormant.

Any planting method that incorporates these three key elements should lead to success, so feel free to be creative. For those who want an established recipe for success, follow the instructions below. Keep in mind that you will need to have at least two blueberry plants of different varieties (for cross-pollination purposes) in order for the plants to set good crops.

For each plant:
- Dig a hole that is 20” deep, 30” long and 20” wide.
- Get a plastic-wrapped bale of sphagnum peat moss (3 cubic feet).
- Punch about a dozen holes in the bottom of the plastic wrap.
- Drop the bale, holes down, into your pre-dug hole.
- Cut an 8”x 8” “X” in the plastic on top of the bale and fold back flaps.
- Plant a bare-root blueberry plant directly into the peat moss (Do this in early-mid April).
- Re-close the “X” using tape, leaving about a 3” hole in the middle to accommodate the trunk of the bush.
- (optional) Install drip irrigation line by cutting a small hole at either end of the bale and feeding the line through the holes, resulting in an irrigation line that runs on top of the peat but under the plastic.
- Fertilize in early May and early July with a balanced fertilizer for acid-loving plants (i.e. Miracle Grow for Acid Loving Plants)
- Enjoy blueberries year after year!
Fire Home Safety and Preparation

By Sharon Bokan, Small Acreage Coordinator, Boulder County

Whether you live on a small acreage or in a townhouse in town there are steps you can take to be prepared for a fire, disaster or other unexpected event. Some of these steps can even be useful if you have your identity stolen.

Before purchasing or building a home or renting an apartment, consider what the construction materials are and potential escape routes out of the home and from the property (you’ll want at least 2 in each case). Consider the accessibility of your property for the large fire trucks. Most fire departments are willing to advise you, look at your plans and even come look at your property to help you have a design that they can access easily. Make sure that your address signage is made of non-combustible material and legible. If you have a gate, it should open inward and is wide enough for a fire truck to enter. Discuss with your fire department how to handle it if you want your gate locked most of the time. Obviously concrete, plaster, stucco, masonry and metal will not burn. Exterior walls made of these materials will survive far better than wood or vinyl siding. Roofs especially in fire prone areas should be metal or tile rather than untreated shake shingles. Decks are a great place to relax on but can add to the vulnerability of your home. Do not store fuel (such as firewood, barbeques with propane tanks) under your deck. Clean out any debris that may accumulate under the deck. Enclosing under the deck will keep you from using the area for storage and debris from collecting as well as keeping sparks from a fire from getting under the deck. Are your soffits and eaves made of wood, vinyl or metal? Of course metal is the most resistant to fire.

Having large windows bring in lots of natural light and beauty into our homes but they are yet another avenue for fire to enter. A single pane window is the most vulnerable when exposed to the heat of a fire, with double and triple only slightly more resistant. During the heat of a fire, windows shatter allowing sparks and debris into the home igniting curtains and furniture. If you are remodeling or changing windows consider going to a tempered glass. When decorating, consider window treatments that present less of a fire hazard (i.e. metal shades) or can be taken down quickly prior to evacuation. Also consider keeping upholstered furniture away from windows or moving them prior to evacuation. If you have time, cover windows with >1/2” plywood or have shutters that you can close.

Know where the shutoffs are to your gas, electric and water mains are and how to turn them off. Have at least one fire extinguisher handy and fully charged.

Periodically go over your insurance policy with your agent and make sure that you know what your policy covers in the way of temporary cash, housing

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and car rental, debris removal, landscape replacement.

Coordinate with neighbors to help evacuate animals and other items of value. Find out the skills and strengths of neighbors and how you can work together to survive. Do you have neighbors with special needs or disabilities or children?

Have an emergency kit ready with medications, first aid kit, water and non-perishable food, flashlights, radio, batteries, tools, spare clothing (preferably for 3-5 days), cell phone chargers, credit cards, and cash (travelers checks and coins). Consider having a safety deposit box for valuables and important papers. Otherwise have them in a central spot in a metal container so that they are easy to grab as you evacuate. Back up the vital files from your computer on a separate hard drive. Do not store the hard drive in your home but either in a safety deposit box or with a trusted friend or relative. Consider scanning valuable and vital papers and storing them on the hard drive also. This will help in replacing the documents if destroyed or your identity is stolen.

Keep a list of valuables and large appliances/electronics in your home. If possible videotape the inside and outside of your home and your vehicle. At least have photos of both and keep those stored off-site either in the separate hard drive or in a safety deposit box.

Brown or White?
Let’s talk Eggs:

Eric McPhail, CSU Extension, Gunnison County Director

While frightening to our government food safety officials, chickens are rampant all over our nation. Once thought of as only farm animals, chickens have become pets and have found their way right into people’s hearts and also, their metropolitan backyards.

Is it a fad or more part of a local food movement? Either way, more and more people are raising chickens and eating eggs right from their own backyard. Can you believe there’s a hen house called an “Eggloo”? I mean, really, what do we know about eggs?

In early American history many people had chickens and knew all about them. Since that time, corporate egg farms have come in and taken over the market and, like with most of our staple food products, we have become less educated on the production of eggs. I’m not writing to suggest this was a downturn in our country’s growth and I’m sure not writing from a Hollywood professional author’s view trying to make millions off of people’s emotions. Rather, I’m writing from an ag teacher’s view. While it may be a lost profession, it’s nice to see agricultural education needed again.

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So what’s the difference between brown eggs and white ones? Answer: Absolutely nothing, except that brown eggs cost more. Brown eggs are more expensive mostly because they come from larger chickens and it’s more costly, production-wise, to feed a large hen than a smaller one. But there’s no taste or nutritional difference. Interestingly, a chicken with red earlobes will have brown eggs and a chicken with white earlobes will have white ones.

That’s not to say that all eggs are created equal. Truthfully it’s the inside that really matters. The inside of an egg is where taste and quality are judged. While most agree there’s not much taste to the egg white, it is notable that the cloudier the white, the fresher the egg. Whites will get clearer as the egg ages. Yolk color, firmness, and size are all based on a hen’s diet and some prefer the taste of eggs from a bug-eating bird while others might not.

Now let’s look at some other egg facts: If refrigerated, and kept in their carton, eggs will last 30-45 days. Even then, eggs usually dry out before they go rancid from bacteria. Never eat a dirty egg, and always return the eggs if you get a “dirty dozen”. All eggs, whether from a farm or store, should be washed by the producer with a sanitizer before being sold to the public. Some think all eggs are fertile, but only eggs from hens who have visited a rooster can be fertile. So no rooster means no chicks. That stringy white thing you see floating in the egg white is the chalazae. It’s more visible in fresh eggs, totally edible and is only the support net for the yolk which keeps it centered in the egg.

What about those blood spots you sometimes find in farm eggs? Those are only tiny blood vessels that busted when the hen made the egg. It’s not a dead chick and it certainly can be removed easily. You don’t notice these in store bought eggs because the eggs are “candled” and those with blood spots are seen and thrown out. Most hens will lay one egg daily but, just like us, they’ll have days they don’t want to work.

A typical day for a backyard chicken will involve scratching around in the dirt for some grubs and insects, perching and sleeping on a roost for a few hours, and then sitting in a box for an hour to lay an egg. If it sounds easy to raise a chicken, that’s because it typically is. Most county Extension agents can help get you started. One worry is always predators. Foxes and skunks are very smart and have been genetically selected to figure out ways to burglarize chicken coops. Fresh eggs should be collected a few times a day preventing them from freezing or being cracked and soiled from too many other birds sitting on them. Again, the eggs should be washed and cooled quickly because every hour an egg is at room temperature it will age as much as it would during a full day in the refrigerator.

It’s exciting to see more and more people taking an interest in our food, how it’s made, and the people making it. Really, does your kid know the difference in a brown egg and a white one? Today we can only hope that more parents and educators are teaching our kids that it’s the inside of a person, I mean egg, that counts, not the color of one’s skin, I mean shell.
Common Forage Grasses
March 10, 2011
Noon-12:30 pm Webinar

Learn identification, use, and key characteristics of common dryland and irrigated grasses in Colorado. Presented by Joe Brummer, Extension Forage Specialist and Associate Professor at CSU
A webinar is an online seminar. You can participate from any computer with internet access. Email jennifer.cook@colostate.edu for more information and to register. It’s a free and easy way to learn.

Permaculture Design Course
March 12-20, 2011
Bellvue, CO

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SUSTAINABLE LIVING ASSOCIATION AND HOME GROWN FOOD ARE THRILLED TO OFFER A 12-DAY, INTENSIVE PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSE CERTIFICATION NEAR FORT COLLINS. This well-rounded Permaculture course is an excellent opportunity to build community and get your heart, hands and head engaged in learning how to design sustainable communities and systems through Permaculture -- an ecological design system inherently rooted in nature and applicable virtually everywhere: gardens, homes, businesses, communities, and relationships.

Permaculture teaches the language of nature, how to communicate within the systems we depend on, and how to redesign them with innate intelligence that supports life and abundance. Register in advance at www.SustainableLivingAssociation.org

Equine Field Day
March 19, 2011 (8 am - 4 pm)
Aurora, CO
Colorado State University Veterinary Extension invites you to the Equine Field Day held at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds. The day includes:

Presentations by equine researchers and veterinarians:
- Estimating the annual cost of your new horse
- Fencing, structures and water tanks
- Pastures and poisonous plants
- Basic equine nutrition: range, dry lot or intermittent pasture
- Dental care, hoof care, vaccinations and parasite control
- Equine identification
- Assessing your horse’s health

Live horse demonstrations:
- How to assess your horse’s health
- Equine emergency kit
- Basic techniques for administering oral paste, wrapping legs, eye medication, etc.

Registration fee is $20 per adult / $5 per 4-H youth member and includes lunch and presentation materials. Register by March 11, 2011. Contact CSU Extension Arapahoe County at 303-730-1920.

Handling Cattle and Other Livestock
March 28, 2011
Noon-1:00 pm Webinar

Join Temple Grandin as she discusses animal behavior and handling techniques. She will talk about what frightens and distracts animals and will bring pointers on fixing handling facilities and how to be safe with bulls. Presented by Dr. Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at CSU, and author of many books including, “Animals In Translation”
A webinar is an online seminar. You can participate from any computer with internet access. Email jennifer.cook@colostate.edu for more information and to register. It’s a free and easy way to learn. Presented by Colorado State University Extension and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

More events on page 12.
Small Acreage Workshop
April 2, 2011 (8 am – 12:15 pm)
Aurora, CO

Join us for an educational workshop at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds. Topics include:
- Keeping My Agriculture Property Tax Status
- So You Want to Raise Goats
- Small-Scale Poultry Production
- Manure Management Practices
- What’s the Buzz About Beekeeping

Please register by March 30, 2011 by contacting Sheryl Wailes at 303-822-5257 or sheryl.wailes@co.nacdnet.net
Registration fee is $10.

High Altitude Gardening Workshop
April 16, 2011
Nederland, CO

This High Altitude Gardening Workshop will present solutions to the many challenges of growing at elevation. Learn from experienced gardeners and professionals about mountain veggie varieties, bio-intensive gardening, season extension techniques, small fruit production, and composting methods. Both beginners and experienced gardeners will find value in this workshop presented by Colorado State University Extension and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Work-
shop will be held at Wild Bear Mountain Ecology center in Nederland, from 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM. For more information and to register, call Boulder County Extension 303-678-6238 or visit https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dENxdWQydllhCZVE2bDBBbW5HS3hfSkE6MA

Small Scale Cattle Production Webinar
May 18, 2011
Noon-1:00 pm Webinar

This introductory course is geared toward small-scale operations and homesteaders. Learn about the various options for beef and dairy production. We will discuss pros and cons, costs, management needs, challenges, marketing, and more. Presented by Jason Ahola, CSU Animal Science Associate Professor.

A webinar is an online seminar. You can participate from any computer with internet access.
Email jennifer.cook@colostate.edu for more information and to register. Presented by Colorado State University Extension and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For an updated list of events, visit CSU Small Acreage Management website www.ext.colostate.edu/sam/