

Activity Ideas

The most memorable experience for kids of all ages occurs when they get involved. To lecture is to see their eyes glaze over with boredom! Remember, we're competing with video games and television for entertainment and educational value. Keep it snappy and interesting, with the most 'hands on' and volunteer opportunities possible.

The following are a few ideas, each with a theme and a message. Position your activity to teach just one or two focused messages. This is just a start, the possibilities are endless!

Use this information as a model for your own display or presentation. The times and guidelines are suggestions only. Feel free to adapt the activity ideas to fit your target audience, for the classroom or a public event. If you come up with a great new activity or a modification of one listed in here, please inform Ontario Pork for future updates of this manual.

Don't give the students handouts at your station. Give them to the teacher or supervisor so they can be used as a follow up back in the classroom or for discussion at home with their parents. Anything that is given to students at the time of the presentation often gets lost or left behind. Let them know that their teachers will have something for them when they return to school.

Sections:

- A. All About Pigs & Farming
- B. Animal Care
- C. Environment
- D. Food & Food Safety

Activity:

Pig Basics

Theme: All About Pigs

Messages:

1. Pig Basics: names, breeds, stages of production
2. What pigs need: housing

Time required: 10 minutes

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 3

Materials Needed:

1. Real pigs or pictures of pigs of various sizes
2. Labels for various pigs: sow, boar, piglet, gilt, barrow, weanling, grower, market hog, etc.
3. Pictures of different barns: farrow to wean; nursery; finisher; farrow to finish
4. Pictures of different breeds

Technique:

1. Ask different volunteers to put the correct label on the correct type of pig (either the pen and/or the picture).
2. Make it a game show, like the Price is Right. Once they have all the labels on the appropriate pens or pictures, tell them how many they have right. Ask them to try and figure out which ones they have wrong.
3. Go through the correct answers and explain the various stages of production. Use the pictures of the different types of barns to help your explanation of how some farms specialize in just one size of pig, while others have all different types and sizes.
4. Make a chart showing the stages of growth. Have the students velcro on the correct answers in order.

sow + boar = piglet ⇒ weanling ⇒ grower ⇒ market hog ⇒ pork

female = gilt ⇒ sow male = barrow or boar

Summary:

“Let’s review what we have learned today. What did we learn about pigs?”

How to make this activity great:

Make the answers a game. The content alone is fairly dry.

Activity:

Pigs = Pork and so much more!

Theme: All about Pigs ~ By-products

Messages:

1. Pigs provide us with pork.
2. Pigs and other animals provide us with many other important products.
3. Nothing is wasted.

Time required: 10 minutes

Target Audience: Grade 3 to Grade 5

Materials Needed:

1. Blue boxes or Rubbermaid type containers to hold items.
2. Variety of actual pork products and by-products and/or their packages.
3. List of products and by-products. (see next page)

Technique:

1. Ask volunteers for answers: "What do we use that comes from pigs?" {typical answers: ham, bacon, pork chops, etc.}
2. Hold up one of the by-products and ask, "Does this come from a pig?" Most students will say 'no'. Yes it does!
3. Ask volunteers to come up and pick up a product of their choice. Have the students arrange themselves according to their products in three categories: at home, at school, at play.

Summary:

"Let's review what we have learned today. What did we learn about what important things pigs provide us with?"

How to make this activity great:

Make the answers a game. The more volunteers involved the better!

Don't get too caught up in what part of the pig the product comes from, but have the list with those answers if it's asked.

Pigs = Pork and so much more!

Processed Products

Ham, bacon, canned meats, side bacon, back bacon, sausages, lunch meats

Fresh Pork Cuts

Pork chops, roasts, spareribs, back ribs, tenderloin

Fatty Acids

Weed killers, rubber, floor wax, crayons, makeup, plastics, chalk, toothpaste, floppy discs, antifreeze

Glands & Organs

Many important medicines, such as insulin; heart valves for special heart surgery; skin grafts; vitamins

Skin

Briefcases, jackets, hats, shoes, etc.

Hair

Artist brushes, dry wall, upholstery

Other

"Pig Ear" dog chews

Activity:

Mystery Tools

Theme: All About Pigs & Farming

Messages:

1. Farmers are educated and knowledgeable people, who use computers and technology.
2. Farmers can be male or female, and do not have the old 'hayseed' image.
3. Farmers care for their animals.

Time required: 10 - 30 minutes (dependent on number of tools)

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 6 (varying tools)

Materials needed:

1. Feed bag or other container to hold the tools.
2. Assortment of farm related items such as:
 - ❖ Computer disk
 - ❖ Teeth clippers
 - ❖ Creep feeder
 - ❖ Nipple drinker
 - ❖ Lipstick or other makeup {particularly effective for female presenters!}
 - ❖ Heat lamp or pad
 - ❖ Small bags of feed, shavings, or minerals
 - ❖ Injectable iron, vaccines or vitamins
 - ❖ Artificial insemination equipment (for older students)
 - ❖ Textbook or educational materials about farming

Technique:

1. Assemble students in a horseshoe shape around you so all can see.
2. Invite one student to pick an item out of the bag.
3. Ask all the students to put up their hands with guesses as to what they think the item is and what it might be used for.
4. At the end of the session, sum up the major messages for the students, with references to some of the items they chose.

Mystery Tools Examples

Example 1: Computer Disk

Presenter: What do you think this is?

Students: Computer Disk

Presenter: Would a farmer use one of these?

Students: NO! {usual answer!}

Presenter: Hey, guess what? Farmers do use computers. They can keep track of all their expenses and income; records on individual pigs; they look up information on the internet; some farms have computerized feeders that know how much and what type of feed each pig eats.

Example 2: Injectable iron or vitamins

Presenter: What do you think this is?

Students: Medicine

Presenter: Can someone read the label?

Student: Iron or vitamins

Presenter: Who here takes a chewable vitamin every day, maybe Flintstones?

Students: Raise their hands.

Presenter: Why do we take vitamins?

Students: To keep us healthy and growing strong.

Presenter: Farmers give their pigs vitamins and iron when they are very young to help keep them healthy too.

Example 3: Heat lamp {or pad}

Presenter: What do you think this is?

Students: Light.

Presenter: This is a special kind of light that gives off heat, called a heat lamp. It's the same idea as the heat lights that we see at McDonald's that keeps the french fries warm! How do you think this would be used on a farm? It is used for newborn piglets to help keep them warm. The sow or mother pig likes to keep cool, but her piglets need to stay warm. Farmers put heat lamps in the pens for the piglets to lay under.

Summary: Let's review some of the things we've learned here today. Can farmers be ladies or men? Do they use computers? Do farmers go to university or college? Why is it important that you like working with animals if you're a farmer?

Activity:

What do Pigs Need?

Theme: Animal Care

Messages:

1. Farmers care for their animals.
2. Pigs need: housing, feed, water, health care.

Time required: 10 minutes

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 5

Materials Needed:

1. A mock- up or real pen measured to represent its actual size
2. Feed and waterer
3. Vaccine or vitamin or injectable iron bottles
4. Heat lamp, fan, or sprinkler {optional}
5. Bales of straw for sitting {optional}
6. Plastic boots and/or foot bath, biosecurity sign (or pictures)

Technique:

1. "Today we're going to pretend we're pig farmers. We need to figure out what our pigs are going to need. Let's start with where our pigs should live."
2. "Where did the three little pigs live? Where do real pigs live? Why do pigs live in barns in Canada?"
3. Show the heat lamp, fan or sprinkler to talk about keeping pigs cool in summer and warm in winter.
4. Have a real pen or mark out the actual size of a pen with bales of straw or rope. Have the children sit on the bales or stand around the perimeter of the pen.
5. "Now our pigs have a nice pen in a barn, what else do you think our pigs need?" Ask for volunteers to move the water and feed into the pen. Describe the feeding process and what pigs eat. "How is this process different from how you eat? Compare it to what and how your pets eat."

6. "What do we do to stay healthy? Why would a farmer want to keep their pigs healthy?" Explain herd health, and working with a veterinarian to prevent sickness whenever possible, and treatment when needed. Explain biosecurity to older students.

Summary:

1. "Let's review what we have learned here today. What do we need to know about pigs before we become a successful farmer?"
2. "What do pigs need to be healthy while they grow?"

How to make this activity great:

- ❖ The day in the life of a pig compared to a day in the life of a pet can be an interesting starting point that could be elaborated on in school.
- ❖ Invite the students to compare what **they** do to stay healthy and clean. It is a great catalyst to challenge the myths about the cleanliness and habits of pigs.
- ❖ With younger children, you could have a few children act out what habit he/she performs each day that aids towards health and cleanliness. (Caution: to avoid any embarrassment, let the students know that although we all need to use the bathroom daily, this is not the dramatization you would like demonstrated!) The children can show their dramatizations to the whole group.

Activity:

Featuring the Farrowing Pen

Theme: Animal Care

Messages:

1. Farmers care for their animals.
2. What pigs need: housing, feed, water, health care, temperatures.
3. Animal care involves trade-offs: sow movement vs. piglet safety

Time required: 10 minutes

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Adult

Materials Needed:

1. A mock-up or real farrowing pen measured to represent its actual size
2. Sow and piglets {or toys}
3. "The Farrowing Pen Story" sign from Ontario Pork
4. Heat lamp
5. Creep feeder and creep feed {optional}
6. 1 kg bag of flour or corn and weigh scale {optional}

Technique:

1. Let the kids have a chance to see the sow and piglet up close. For some, this may be the only chance they will ever get. They need to touch and smell. Let them talk to each other as they observe the pigs before you begin talking. They need to experience this one. No matter what you say, the pigs will be the star attraction!
2. You may need to have a different arrangement as you present, as they will only want to stare at the pigs. If your display forces them to put their backs to the farrowing unit, then you won't be trying to constantly get their attention.
3. "What's a mother pig called? How many piglets does this sow have?"
4. "A sow can give birth to 8-12 piglets in one litter. If they have 2 litters each year, what is the maximum number of piglets a sow can have?"
5. "Piglets weigh 1-2 kg when they are born. What item here weighs that much?"
Choose one child to pick and put flour or corn on the weigh scale.

6. "A full grown sow can weigh x kg. How many students would it take to weigh that much?"
7. "Why do you think sows are put in special pens like this to give birth and nurse their piglets?" "When pigs give birth, it's called 'farrowing', so this is called a 'farrowing pen'."
8. Heat lamp or pad: "What do you think this is? What is it used for?" Explain how it helps to keep the piglets warm, while the sow stays cool.
9. "Piglets are kept in this pen with the sow for approximately 3 weeks, until they are weaned from milk. What do you think they must be able to do before they can be weaned from the sow?" Show them the creep feeder as a hint! "Once piglets are eating this special solid food they can be weaned and moved into a different pen or a different barn."
10. **For older students:** "What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of putting pigs in a pen like this one?" Explain the animal welfare research on the farrowing pen, with oval and elliptical shapes and moveable sides to allow for more sow freedom.

Summary:

1. "Let's review what we have learned here today. What do we call this pen?"
2. "Can someone remind me of all the reasons why the sow and piglets are kept in this type of pen?"

How to make this activity great:

- ❖ Be flexible. Work with the sow and piglets. If they start nursing, stop and let the children watch.
- ❖ Farmers need to be "on-the-spot problem solvers". Encourage children to list any times they needed to make decisions "on- the- spot" when they return to school. Maybe they could list their results over the next week.
- ❖ Use a chart that includes any of the questions above to create a multi-sensory experience. Let the child who guesses correctly put the right answer up in the space and have him/her explain how he/she arrived at the solution.

1. What's a mother pig called? _____
2. How many piglets can one sow have in one year? _____
3. What keeps piglets warm? _____
4. How long do piglets stay with the sow? _____
5. What do piglets eat? _____

Activity:

Tracking The Nutrient Cycle

Theme: Environment

Messages:

1. Farmers care about the environment: their livelihood depends on it.
2. Manure is a valuable resource as part of the nutrient cycle.

Time required: 10 – 30 minutes

Space required: 10 x 20 feet (minimum)
(for displays)

Target Audience: Grade 3 to Adult

Materials needed: {Pictures, toys and/or the real thing!}

1. Sow and piglets
2. Bags of manure or fertilizer
3. Blue recycling boxes or a wheelbarrow
4. Feed samples of corn and/or soybeans
5. Nutrient cycle signs and display boards from Ontario Pork
6. Toy manure spreader or tanker {optional}
7. Corn stalks, straw and/or ropes to make a maze {optional}

Technique:

The purpose is to physically walk the students through the nutrient cycle. The most fun option is to make a maze that students must go through to get to the next station. If space is limited, the four stations can be set up close together, without a maze in between.

Station 1: The Sow

1. Assemble students around the sow (or other animal) display so all can see.

2. Ask: "How many piglets do you think this sow, adult female pig, can have in one year?"
3. Take guesses. Answer: The average sow has 20 piglets in one year, in two litters.
4. If you have a display and time allows: Have the students velcro on and count 20 pictures of piglets onto the display.

Station 2: Manure

1. Explain, "Pigs, like all animals, produce manure every day. How much manure do you think those 20 pigs we just talked about would produce in one year?"
2. Take guesses. Answer: 20 pigs will produce 54,000 litres or 540 hectolitres in one year." Refer to actual samples of manure or fertilizers.
3. "That's a lot of manure. What do farmers do with it all? Let's find out!"

Station 3: Fertilize Crops

1. Explain, "Manure is a valuable fertilizer for plants and crops on farms and at our homes."
2. Ask, "How many people here have a vegetable or flower garden? Why do we put fertilizer on our gardens?"
3. "Remember those 20 pigs gave us 540 hectolitres of manure? Manure is applied to the land from manure spreaders or tankers like this one (show visual or toy spreader).
4. That much manure can fertilize enough land to produce 4700 kilograms of corn." (Based on the nitrogen requirements of corn).
5. "What do farmers do with all that corn? Let's find out!"

Station 4: Pig Feed

1. Explain, "What do you think pigs eat?"
2. "Remember that 4700 kg of corn we talked about at the last station? How many pigs do you think that much corn will feed?"
3. "4700 kg of corn can feed 17 pigs in a year, almost as many as where we started with 20."

Summary:

1. Now let's review the nutrient cycle: pigs produce manure, manure is applied to the land to help plants grow, pigs eat the plants, and the cycle continues!
2. How is farming like a recycling program?
3. Why is manure important on the farm?
4. If time allows: how are people part of the nutrient cycle?

Activity:

The Original Recycling Program

Theme: Environment

Messages:

1. Farmers care about the environment: their livelihood depends on it.
2. Farming is the original recycling program.

Time required: 5 - 20 minutes

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 3

Materials needed:

1. Blue recycling box
2. Green compost box (Loblaws green boxes work well)
3. Various household recycling items such as: pop can, newspaper, cardboard box, plastic bottle.
4. Various compostable items: egg shells, banana peel, coffee grinds
5. One sow, 20 piglets (pictures or toys)
6. Manure or fertilizer (picture or small bag full)
7. Corn and/or soybeans (feed samples)
8. Corn and/or soybean products for people: can of corn, soybean oil, etc.
9. Pork product (pictures or real)
10. Houseplant

Technique:

1. "Let's talk about recycling. Why do we recycle some of our garbage?"
2. As a motivator, have the kids decide where the various items selected should go. Pick different children to put the items where they belong (e.g. a banana peel goes in a compost, a pop can goes in a recycling container etc.)
3. Expand their thinking and ask them what else is recycled in their day to day lives. (e.g. composts, plastics, hand-me-down clothing)
4. How is farming the original recycling program? Let's find out.

5. Pick different children to place the items from the nutrient cycle and the circle of life chart in order.

pigs ⇒ manure ⇒ crops ⇒ animal feeds ⇒ pigs & other animals
pigs ⇒ pork ⇒ people
pigs ⇒ manure ⇒ crops ⇒ people
pigs ⇒ manure ⇒ flowers & vegetables ⇒ people

How to make this activity great:

- ❖ Let them feel and smell the feed.
- ❖ Let them see the amount of manure a pig produces in one day. How much does it weigh?
- ❖ How much manure would that pig produce in one year?
- ❖ How much does a pig eat?
- ❖ Refer to the trader card with the flow chart demonstrating how farming is the original recycling program. You could duplicate that diagram so that each component is an individual piece so that the children could sort and order the circle of life.
- ❖ Have the children design their own charts demonstrating another cycle.
- ❖ Let the students, in partners, sort and classify the pieces in an appropriate order. What daily cycles take place in their classrooms?

Activity:

Dig for a Pig

Purpose:

The purpose of the Dig for a Pig activity centre is to feature a 'hands on' event which is both fun and educational for children of all ages.

Materials needed:

1. Feed tub or rubbermaid container: the larger the better!
2. Corn to fill feed tub.
3. Feed scoop.
4. Pig erasers.
5. Trivia questions.
6. Dig for a Pig signs
7. Prizes (pig erasers or trader cards)

Steps:

1. Fill feed tub with corn.
2. Hide pig erasers in the corn.
3. Post 'Dig for a Pig' signs around or on the feed tub.

How to Play the Game:

- The game works best if someone can staff it all the time.
- Have children line up to take a turn answering a fun pig trivia question (see examples on the following pages). Make up really simple questions for very young children (ie. what sound does a pig make).
- If they answer the question correctly, they win the opportunity to 'Dig for a Pig' with the feed scoop.
- If they find a pig eraser, they can keep that as their prize. If you don't have enough pig erasers, they can dig for a pig and get a trader card as a prize!
- The trivia questions can be copied onto 11"x17" paper, which can be folded to keep the answer a surprise. If there isn't anyone available to work there full-time, place the trivia questions on a wall near the feed tub. This isn't as effective as talking with the children directly.

Activity:

Pig Seeds

Theme: Fun!

Time required: 15 - 20 minutes, in a classroom setting

Target Audience: Kindergarten to Grade 3

Materials needed:

1. Small baggies (one for each student)
2. White beans (suitable for colouring on)
3. Pig Seed instructions (see next page).
4. Markers
5. Stapler

Technique:

1. Explain the activity. You can encourage some teaching around pigs with this activity, but the basic premise is to have fun!
2. Give each student a baggie, four or five seeds, and a Pig Seed instruction set.
3. Ask the students to colour their seeds (creativity is encouraged!). Explain
4. Fold and staple the instruction sheet to the baggie.