

What is a Self-Feeder?

Briefly, a self-feeder for hogs consists of a box or hopper, so constructed that when filled with meal it will automatically deliver, or keep continually before the pigs, in troughs, a certain amount of dry feed.

Where Automatic Feeding May Prove an Economy.

A self-feeder will hardly prove economical where two or three pigs are kept. It will be obviously useless where garbage or refuse is the main food item. Further, where large quantities of dairy by-products are available and comparatively few pigs fed, the use of a self-feeder would not be indicated.

Where more than ten pigs are kept, however, the labour-saving feature warrants consideration. To the swine grower, who contemplates reducing his output on account of labour scarcity, the self-feeder is to be recommended.

Requirements of a Good Self-feeder for Swine.

The self-feeder to be successful must be cheap, strong, capacious, portable, easy to construct, weather-tight, easy of regulation for different textured meals, and, most important of all, so arranged that the contents will feed into the troughs with minimum stoppage, caused by the blocking of the meal in the hopper. Further, the troughs must be constructed to ensure the minimum amount of waste such as might be caused by the animals nosing the meal over the sides or soiling it by standing in the troughs. While several plans of feeders may be recommended, the one herein illustrated and described has been found to include nearly all of the desirable features mentioned.

Advantages of the Self-feeder over Hand-feeding Methods.

1. Saves over 60 per cent of the labour. 2. Reduces waste of feed to the minimum. 3. Prevents digestive troubles due to overfeeding—the pigs having full access to the meal at all times, and therefore eating in small quantities frequently instead of suddenly overloading the stomach two or three times in the day. 4. Many pigs may be fed from small trough space; they do not all feed at the same time. 5. All individuals have an equal chance; the weak pig benefits accordingly.

Correct Conditions for Using the Self-feeder.

Place the feeder on a platform or floor that will remain clean during wet weather and prove accessible to the pigs at all times. Individual platforms placed on each side of the feeder, 3 feet wide, the length of the trough, and made of 2-inch plank, will be found useful. If desired, these may become an integral part of the outfit, feeder and platforms being built on the same pieces. The latter arrangement tends to unwieldiness. Provide shade of some sort, either trees or a rough shed. While this system of feeding will prove relatively economical in dry lot feeding where green food, skim-milk, or water are supplied daily, the maximum efficiency will be reached where the feeders are placed in a good clover, alfalfa, rape, or grass pasture. In any case, dry lot or pasture, with or without milk products, fresh water should always be supplied, preferably running, or from some self-watering device, regularly and frequently filled.

When to Use and When to Avoid the Self-feeder.

Where plenty of skim-milk or other milk by-product is at hand, wean young pigs in the regular way to trough feeding. When they are nine or ten weeks old, introduce the self-feeder. Continue hand feeding twice a day, gradually reducing the slop until at three months the pig obtains all his meal dry. An abrupt change in feed will show a corresponding abrupt and undesirable change in the condition of the pig.

WEANING LITTLE PIGS ON THE FEEDER.

Where little or no milk by-product is available, surprisingly good results may be obtained with the feeder. Delay weaning as long as possible. For two or three weeks before weaning, place a small feeder (an old box may be