

What Goes in the Showbox

Author:

Jodi Sterle, Texas A&M University

Reviewers:

Richard Ness, University of Nebraska
Todd See, North Carolina State University

Introduction

You have the “perfect” pig, you have walked it, brushed it, fed it, and are ready to go to the show – or are you? Packing the showbox is just as important as packing your suitcase. You want to make sure you have everything you need, yet don’t want to haul a lot of unnecessary items and weight. Here is a checklist to make sure you have everything you need to present your champion.

Objective

To provide youth swine exhibitors with a checklist of necessary items for their showbox.

What Goes in the Showbox

- **Show stick (pipe or whip) –**
You will most likely need to use your “steering device” to help load your pigs on the trailer to take them to the show, don’t forget to take it with you!
 - **Brush(es)**
It is a good idea to take at least a couple of brushes – one that you take to the wash rack with you to scrub, and a small one for the show ring.
 - **Shampoo (regular or waterless)**
There are many different kinds of livestock shampoos, and some exhibitors even use human shampoo or dish soap. Waterless shampoos work great if the weather and facilities allow you to wash at home just prior to loading and then use the waterless right in the pen at the show. This prevents herding pigs to and from the washrack and works great if the pigs are not too dirty. Personal experience: It may be a good idea to take regular shampoo even if you are planning on using waterless, in case your animals get dirty in the trailer.
 - **Safety pins or belt clip**
If you show with an exhibitor number, you will need some way to attach it to your clothing. Personal experience: Safety pins are always a good backup, even if you have a belt clip, and work well on younger,
- smaller exhibitors, or if you have to wear the exhibitor number in numerous classes.
 - **Notepad and pen**
Helpful for writing down class numbers for market and breeding shows, as well as showmanship. Also needed for tracking weight on market hogs.
 - **Water hose (small)**
While some washracks have hoses, it is always a good idea to have one in your showbox. Some are available especially for smaller tack boxes and come tightly coiled. Only about 5-10 feet is usually needed. Another consideration: a spray nozzle for the end of the hose.
 - **Small first aid kit**
Band aids, antibiotic crème, and other commonly used medications belong in the showbox for minor cuts and illnesses.
 - **Paper towels**
Personal experience: Fold a paper towel and put it in the front pocket of your jeans when you go to the show ring. In case a pig (yours or someone else’s) causes you or your pig to get dirty, you have something clean to wipe it off, then just place it back into your pocket until you can throw it away.
 - **Small towel(s)**
One of the current trends is for exhibitors to have these small towels in the back pocket of their jeans during the show, but many judges say that this is distracting. They still belong in the tack box, for preparation before the class, when using waterless shampoo, or for those little emergencies when your pig (or you) get dirty on the way to the showing or in the makeup ring.



- **Spray bottle and/or spray pump**
Especially necessary for “water only” shows, as well as touchup. Spraying a fine mist over your pig makes it appear fresher. A word of caution: many spray nozzles have been ruined by allowing pigs to crush them when giving them a drink (especially in holding pens during the show), or become clogged with sand.
- **Wire**
Whether it is keeping a clever pig in a pen, tying waterers, or hanging feeders, wire is a necessity! A hint: Make your own spool by taking the wire off of the spool, wrapping it in a circle, and covering the outside with duct tape. You will not have to fight the constant unraveling each time you use it!
- **Zip ties**
An alternative to wire, although it is a good idea to include both in your tack box. Personal experience has shown that zip ties are great for most things, but are not as strong as wire for things that pigs will be nosing a bunch.
- **Wire cutters**
Necessary tool even if you use zip ties!
- **Scissors**
Great for touching up your pigs, especially if you have decided to clip ahead of time. You may not have noticed a spot that you missed until you get under the lights in the show barn, or may want to touch up tails, ears and face.
- Most market shows are “water only” shows, and do not allow any foreign substances such as oil or powder to be applied to the animals. Most also forbid clippers on the show grounds. Be sure to read the rules of the show before packing your showbox!
- **Panel to attach feeders**
The most common pen type at shows has vertical bars, not horizontal. If using hanging feeders, cut a small piece of hog (wire) paneling and zip tie or wire the panel to the bars, then attach your feeder. Another tip: you can “figure eight” wire between the bars to attach your hanging feeders, but a nosy hog can often get these to slide down over a couple of days.
- **Waterers**
Water should never be withheld from pigs. Plastic PVC pipe that is capped and has a nipple attached works well, as long as your pigs are familiar with drinking from nipples. Watering out of a bucket can be done, but you must offer it to the pigs numerous times throughout each day and it is more difficult to monitor intake, especially in market situations when weight is essential.
- **Shavings**
Some shows provide shavings, and some do not allow outside shavings to be brought in. Before unloading (and even before packing), find out what the rules of the show state.
- **Partition to separate pigs**
Many show pens are either 5’ by 5’ or 6’ by 6’, allowing for two pigs per pen. You may be penned with another exhibitor. Since most market hogs are penned individually throughout the growing period, and since unfamiliar hogs often fight with each other, a partition is useful. These may be made from a variety of materials, from wood to aluminum, purchased or homemade, but most are sliding in order to extend across a variety of pen sizes. Personal observation: if you are going to be showing often, the purchase of a lightweight aluminum partition is a wise investment!
- **Manure pick**
It may not fit in the tack box, but cleaning your pen is just as important at the show as it is at home. It will save you another trip to the wash rack!

Other Items You May Need

- **Feed**
Only take the feed that you think you will need, and don’t take feed home once it has been in the barn. Feed can be a vector for disease organisms.
- **Bucket**
Small bucket for carrying feed and water to your animals.
- **Feeders**
Pans or hanging feeders work well. If possible, keep consistent with what you have been using at home.

