



# Declared Weights at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Swine Show

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## Introduction

Animal welfare is often discussed in the mainstream media. In recent years, video images of improper treatment of animals have surfaced, and the treatment of food animals has been a topic of controversy that has even been debated in Congress. As a youth activity, livestock exhibition should be at the forefront of setting the tone for the proper treatment of animals in years to come.

Unlike some other states, Indiana has not enacted legislation mandating food animal production practices. However, as the general population becomes more removed from food animal production, it is clear that failing to promote proper animal welfare can paint a poor image for animal agriculture. Indiana 4-H firmly believes that by educating our youth on how to properly care for their animals, we will have taken an essential step toward bridging the gap that continues to widen between animal agriculturists and the general public.

Sometimes the stress experienced by the youth and adults involved in exhibiting livestock causes them to overlook the stress being placed on the animals. A stressful time at any show is during weigh-in, and in some cases, the animal itself experiences the most stress. When feed and water have been withheld from animals, not only can the cooperation and health of the animal be compromised, but animal handlers may also become impatient, which leads to increased frustration levels for all those involved with the process.

Dr. Jodi Sterle, Texas swine Extension specialist and superintendent of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Swine Show, had this to say about the declared weight system when Indiana 4-H was examining the change in the fall of 2009:

*"All of our shows declare weights. This is something that I really tried hard to implement about six years ago when we had more stressors. . . . It took me a while to wrap my head around it, but I finally asked myself, Do I really want this barrow, who weighed 284 at home, to be sucked down to go across the scales (adding more time, manpower and stress to the show), only to be bulked back up again after weighing in and before showing? This is a lot of undue stress."*

In an effort to promote animal welfare, Indiana 4-H has implemented the declared weight system at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Swine Show. The following information has been developed in an attempt to make a seamless transition from the previous method and adopt a very similar system that has been used for years at the Indiana State Fair Open Barrow Show.

## How Will This Work?

The new weigh-in procedure is very similar to the previous procedure with just one change. Examine the comparison on page 2 to see just how similar it will be.

# Comparison of the Previous and Current Indiana State Fair Swine Show Weigh-in Procedures

*(changes appear in bold)*

## Previous

- ▶ Animal arrives in holding pen of either the East or West Show Ring, depending on breed.
- ▶ Animal is moved from holding pen to placing pen to be examined by breed sifter and/or 4-H staff.
- ▶ All crossbreds and purebreds passing breed inspection move to tagging and weighing line.
- ▶ Animals move through line and are ear-tagged.
- ▶ Animal enters scales and is weighed.
- ▶ Weight is determined to be the show weight and is recorded on weigh ticket.
- ▶ Copy of weigh ticket is returned to individual accompanying animal.
- ▶ Animal exits scales and is returned to exhibitors' pen.

## Current

- ▶ Animal arrives in holding pen of either the East or West Show Ring, depending on breed.
- ▶ Animal is moved from holding pen to placing pen to be examined by breed sifter and/or 4-H staff.
- ▶ All crossbreds and purebreds passing breed inspection move to tagging and weighing line.
- ▶ Animals move through line and are ear-tagged.
- ▶ Animal enters scales and is weighed.
- ▶ **Individual accompanying animal either accepts weight as the animals' show weight or declares an alternate weight to be used as the show weight. The show weight is recorded on weigh ticket.**
- ▶ Copy of weigh ticket is returned to individual accompanying animal.
- ▶ Animal exits scales and is returned to exhibitors' pen.

Figure 1

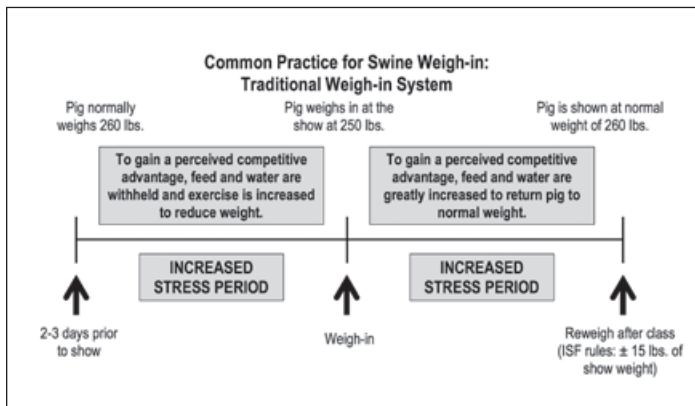
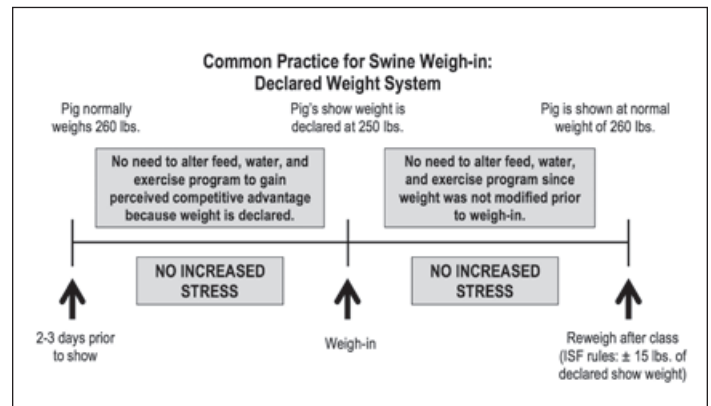


Figure 2



## Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a series of questions that have been asked regarding the declared weight system.

**Q:** *This says declaring must take place before the pig leaves the scales. Is that true? How do I prepare for that?*

**A:** Yes, that is how the process will be implemented at the Indiana State Fair so personnel will always be available to answer questions. We recommend using the test scales to prepare prior to coming to the official scales. That way when the pig is weighed on the official scales, you will already have an idea about what to declare since you will know the test weight. Read below for recommendations on how to determine the declared show weight.

**Q:** *Which weight is the sale weight?*

**A:** The buyer at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Show will accept the declared weight as the sale weight.

**Q:** *Do I have to declare a show weight?*

**A:** Yes. However, the official scale weight can simply be accepted as the show weight, or the individual entering the pig can decide to declare a different show weight as long as the pig is within the acceptable weight range.

**Q:** *Which barrows can have their show weight declared?*

**A:** All barrows that weigh within the acceptable weight range used in past years for show entry (230–295 pounds).

**Q:** *I thought 280 pounds was the maximum weight for barrows in the past. Is this not the case?*

**A:** Barrows have been allowed to weigh between 281–295 pounds in previous years, and their

show weight has been recorded as 280 pounds (in some instances, their actual weight was used to determine classes). Basically, swine weighing between 281–295 pounds were allowed to declare their show weight as 280 pounds in previous years.

**Q:** *Does that mean that, if my barrow weighs between 281–295 pounds, I have to declare the show weight at 280 pounds?*

**A:** No. In an attempt to reduce confusion by minimizing changes at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Show, all barrows that previously weighed between 230–295 pounds at weigh-in are eligible to show. However, the show weight range is still 230–280 pounds, meaning that all declared show weights must fall between 230–280 pounds.

**Q:** *So, it sounds like this is not a new procedure for Indiana. Is that true?*

**A:** Yes. The declared weight system has been used for years at the Indiana State Fair Open Barrow Show. Indirectly, it has been in place for barrows weighing 281–295 pounds at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Show and is commonly used on the Indiana Junior Swine Circuit.

**Q:** *Is there still a 15-pound weigh-back at the end of class?*

**A:** Yes. The two top-placing pigs from each class will still be required to weigh within 15 pounds of their declared show weight. Basically, the show will operate the same, except each exhibitor now has complete control over determining what weight their pig will show at.

**Q:** *What is used to determine the 15-pound reweigh at the end of class?*

**A:** The 15-pound weigh-back will be determined from the declared show weight. This is the only weight that will be recorded on the weigh ticket.

**Q:** *What do you mean by “complete control over determining what weight their pig will show at”?*

**A:** In the past, a common practice was to withhold feed and water from swine projects to manipulate the weight when the animals crossed the scales in hopes that animals would weigh the optimal weight as determined by the exhibitor. With this current system, each exhibitor is able to determine the optimal show weight of his or her project without any need to withhold feed and water to manipulate the animal’s weight.

**Q:** *What do you mean by “without any need to withhold feed and water”?*

**A:** Indiana 4-H has always promoted the proper treatment of animals, but with the system used in the past, some exhibitors felt it was necessary to withhold feed and water so their animal weighed a desired weight. With the changes to the weigh-in protocol, animals can remain on full feed and water during the entire process and still show at the weight desired by the exhibitor.

**Q:** *So with the declared weight system there is never a need to withhold feed and water?*

**A:** Yes, if managed properly there is no competitive advantage to withhold feed and water. If the pig is full when it crosses the scale, is within the accepted weight range, and a manageable show weight is declared, the outcome of the show should be fair to both the 4-H members and the animals.

**Q:** *What about pigs that weigh outside the 230–295 pound range at weigh-in?*

**A:** Each exhibitor will be allowed one (1) reweigh as in the past for his or her project to meet the 230–295 pound weight range eligible to enter into the show. If exhibitors know that a modified feeding, watering, and

exercise program is necessary for their project to be less than 295 pounds at weigh-in, Indiana 4-H strongly encourages the health and wellness of the animal as the ultimate goal. Under no circumstances will Indiana 4-H condone withholding feed and water from livestock projects.

**Q:** *How can I prevent withholding feed and water at all times?*

**A:** Only bring animals that, when full of feed and water, naturally weigh between 230–295 pounds. Then declare the show weight at a manageable weight so the pig can weigh within 15 pounds at the conclusion of their class without restricting feed and water. A good rule of thumb for novice exhibitors is to accept the actual weight of the pig, or weigh them full, subtract 5 pounds from the full weight, and declare that as the show weight. (Some examples are provided at the end of this document.) By only reducing the weight by 5 pounds, the exhibitor can factor in the potential growth of the pig (less than 2 lbs./day while at the fair) into the declared weight. This can prevent the need to withhold feed and water to be within the 15-pound reweigh after class.

**Q:** *Are there any weight restrictions for gilts?*

**A:** Yes. ALL gilts should weigh 200 pounds or more to show. This means that when gilts are tagged and weighed, even the purebred gilts must weigh more than 200 pounds to show.

**Q:** *What about gilts?*

**A:** Only crossbred gilts will have declared weights. The system for gilts will be the same as the one used for barrows; however, the only weight restriction is the minimum of 200 pounds. Purebred gilts will still be shown by age but must also weigh a minimum of 200 pounds to be shown.

## **Possible Scenarios for Declaring Show Weight**

Below are some possible scenarios that may be encountered at the Indiana State Fair 4-H Swine Show. Keep in mind that these recommendations are to be used as guidelines to aid in maximizing the educational value of the program while also maintaining appropriate animal care. They are simply recommendations. Each exhibitor will be held responsible for declaring the show weight of his or her animals.

### ***“My barrow or crossbred gilt weighed 265 pounds at weigh-in. What are my options?”***

#### **Option 1**

Accept 265 pounds as the show weight.

- The maximum reweigh weight is now 280 pounds.
- The minimum reweigh weight is now 250 pounds.
- This is the easiest and simplest option.

#### **Option 2**

Declare a lighter show weight by subtracting 5 pounds from the official scale weight, resulting in a declared show weight of 260 pounds.

- The maximum reweigh weight is now 275 pounds.
- The minimum reweigh weight is now 245 pounds.
  - As long as the animal was full when weighed in, a reduction in 5 pounds should be a manageable show weight for the animal to fall within the reweigh guidelines and still receive appropriate care.
  - Declaring a lighter show weight can be very easy or very difficult. If it is approached with the mindset of simply subtracting a set weight, such as the 5 pounds in this example, then this option is very easy and manageable.
  - Reducing the show weight may prevent an exhibitor’s project from being in a class with pigs that are much heavier.

#### **Option 3**

Declare any lighter show weight between 230–264 pounds.

- The maximum reweigh weight is calculated to be 15 pounds heavier than the declared show weight.
- The minimum reweigh weight is calculated to be 15 pounds lighter than the declared show weight.
  - As long as the animal was full when weighed in, a moderate reduction in weight should be manageable without compromising animal welfare.
  - If a large reduction is declared, it is unlikely that a healthy modification to the feeding, watering, and exercise protocol for the pig can take place prior to reweighing at the end of the showing. Indiana 4-H only supports the implementation of animal care methods that put the health and well-being of the animal as a top priority.
  - Reducing the show weight may prevent an exhibitor’s project from being in a class with pigs that are much heavier, but drastic reductions could cause undue stress to the pig and to the exhibitor.

#### **Option 4**

Declare a heavier show weight by adding 5 pounds to the official scale weight, resulting in a declared show weight of 270 pounds.

- The maximum reweigh weight is now 285 pounds.
- The minimum reweigh weight is now 255 pounds.
  - As long as the animal was full when weighed in, a moderate increase in weight should be manageable without compromising animal welfare.
  - Declaring a heavier show weight can be very easy or very difficult. If it is approached with the mindset of simply adding a set weight, such as the 5 pounds in the example, then this option is very easy and manageable.

- Increasing the show weight may allow an exhibitor's project to be in a class with pigs that are much heavier.

### Option 5

- Declare a heavier show weight between 266–280 pounds.
- The maximum reweigh weight is now 15 pounds heavier than the declared show weight.
  - The minimum reweigh weight is now 15 pounds lighter than the declared show weight.
  - As long as the animal was full when weighed in, any increase in weight should not require feed and water restriction.
  - If a large increase is declared, such as to 280 pounds, there should not be a need to reduce feed and water intake. However, the pig will likely show in a class with much heavier pigs.

### ***“My barrow weighed 296 or more pounds when he weighed in. What can I do?”***

The option is the same as in previous years. This barrow is not allowed entry into the show because his weight is not within the range determined to be acceptable for declaring. Exhibitors are allowed one (1) reweigh for their barrows to be within the acceptable range (230–295 pounds) for declaring.

- Bringing barrows to the Indiana State Fair 4-H Swine Show that are heavier than the already established 15-pound overage range for acceptability (281–295 lbs.) is strongly discouraged by Indiana 4-H. Doing so may require a modified feeding and watering protocol, which could negate the positive animal welfare practice being established by declaring show weights.

### ***“My barrow weighed 290 pounds when he weighed in. What can I do?”***

Declare a lighter show weight between 230–280 pounds.

- The logical choice is 280 pounds, since that would allow the most weight gain for a pig to still meet the reweigh requirements after class.
- If 280 pounds is declared:
  - The maximum reweigh weight is now 295 pounds
  - The minimum reweigh weight is now 265 pounds.
- If a large reduction is declared, it is unlikely that a healthy modification to the feeding, watering, and exercise protocol for the pig can take place prior to reweighing at the end of showing. Indiana 4-H only supports the implementation of animal care methods that put the health and well-being of the animal as a top priority.

### ***“My barrow weighed 225 pounds at weigh-in. What can I do?”***

The option is the same as in previous years. Exhibitors are allowed one (1) reweigh attempt for a barrow to reach the 230-pound minimum to be allowed to declare a show weight.

### ***“My gilt (purebred or crossbred) weighed 195 pounds at weigh-in. What can I do?”***

Exhibitors are allowed one (1) reweigh attempt for a gilt to reach the 200-pound minimum established for the Indiana State Fair 4-H Swine Show.

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## Notes

Purebred gilts will still show by age but must weigh at least 200 pounds for entry into the show.

Remember, the declared weight is the only recorded weight. Once an exhibitor has declared an animal's weight, all reweigh weights will be determined from the declared show weight.

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More information about the 4-H Swine Show as well as all other Indiana State Fair animal shows is in the Indiana State Fair 4-H Handbook/Premium List, which can be found at [www.in.gov/statefair/fair/competition/4h\\_handbook.html](http://www.in.gov/statefair/fair/competition/4h_handbook.html).

For additional information regarding Indiana State Fair 4-H animal shows, please contact Aaron Fisher at [aaronfisher@purdue.edu](mailto:aaronfisher@purdue.edu).

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