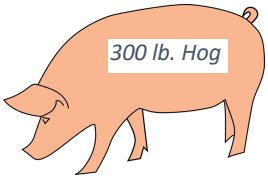
Fruit Hill Farms **Hog Processing Explained***

*Information gathered from many University and State Departments of Agriculture

Hog producers are familiar with carcass meat cuts but, for the average purchaser who may only secure a half animal once a year complicated by the options for a variety of meat cuts from each section (i.e., what comes from each section) an overview can help put consumers at ease when ordering freezer meat and completing a cutting sheet. Below are some basics. The back explains the breakdown of a half carcass.



- Slaughter size: A hog is ready for slaughter between 225 and 300 pounds. 260-280 is a preferred weight. For simple math, the calculations herein are for a 300 pound live weight (LW) hog.

- Slaughter Procedure and Carcass Calculations: At slaughter the animal is bled, eviscerated, the head, feet and skin removed, and sliced down the backbone into two halves. The standard carcass dressing percentage (DP) for hogs is 70-72% of the animals live weight (LW). This percentage can be used to calculate the average carcass weight. For example, using the conservative 70% yield, the 300 lb. LW hog should yield a hot (unchilled) carcass weight of 210 lbs. (300 x .70 = 210).

- Expected Carcass Yield: A general rule of thumb at this point, provided the purchaser chooses the "standard cut" package offered by most processors, is the carcass will yield the purchaser about 66% of its carcass weight in commercial cuts (diagram on back page) (210 x .66 = 139 lbs.) or about 48% of its LW (300 x .48 = 144 lbs.). This means the purchaser should receive between 139 and 144 lbs. of product for their freezer. There are variables that can change these numbers including:
    - Fatness of the animal - very fat animals will yield a higher dressing percentage however they may have more waste fat to be trimmed away
    - Stomach fill and dirt on the hide - both will bring down the standard percentage calculation
    - Optional cuts not taken - jowl meat, bones, hocks, feet, fat slabs, and organs
    - Deboned *vs* Bone-in - while requiring less freezer space, deboning yields less take-home weight
    - Fresh *vs* Cured & Smoked - heat processing will reduce the total yield of meat returned
    - Time in the cooler – normally a 3% moisture loss that can be higher with increased cooler time
    - Trimmings and Processing – trimming excess fat, bone dust, and de-boning can account for an additional 20% loss of the hanging carcass weight.

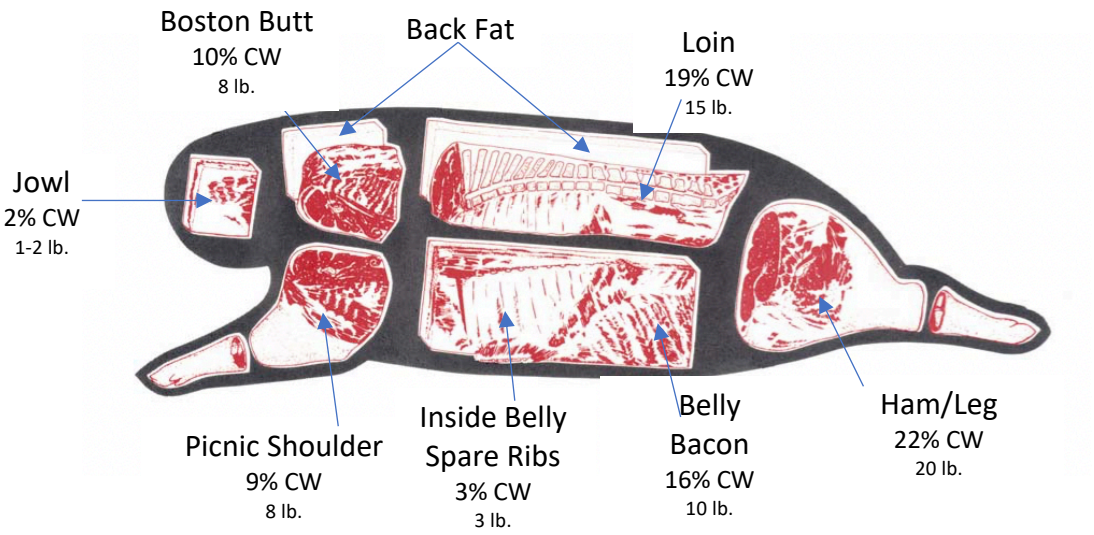
- Freezer Space Requirement: For a "standard cut" whole hog, about 8 cubic feet of freezer space is needed (i.e., two large boxes of meat). Space required decreases with greater "boneless" or ground pork choices.

- Cutting Sheet: Cutting instructions are needed even if choosing the "standard cut" to indicate what you want done with the extras or if you would like any meats cured and smoked. If purchasing a whole hog, each half can be ordered cut independently of the other allowing for a larger variety of cuts.

- Meat Processing Procedure: All meat is cut and wrapped to your specifications, vacuum packaged with packages clearly marked, and frozen for transfer to your home freezer. Sausage seasoning is MSG free.

- Delivery Times: All orders choosing "All fresh cuts" with no cured or smoked meats will be delivered as soon as the animal is processed and frozen usually within three or four days of slaughter. Curing and smoking takes14-18 days and will add about 18 days to delivery from time of slaughter as all fresh meats will be cut, wrapped, frozen and held at the meat processors for a one-time, all-cuts delivery.

- "Fresh" *vs* "Cured/Smoked – Ham and Bacons must be cured/smoked for the familiar taste of the products.



½ Hog Carcass Displaying Primal Cuts, Percentages, and Average Pounds

Feet, Tail, and Neckbones = 4%; Collar, Back Fat, and Clear Plate = 15%

For consumer use, primal cuts are further divided into smaller, more manageable "retail" cuts. These cuts are chosen at the time of order using a "cutting instructions sheet" and sent with the animal to the processer. Although there are a variety of retail cuts for each primal area, choices must be made to which is more desired because many cuts are from the same piece of meat. Choose what is most wanted from the primal area and adjust the cuts from that choice. For more variety in retail cuts, consider purchasing a whole hog as each half is cut independently from the other allowing for more choices in cuts.

A "**Standard Cut**" option is available for those who like most cuts offered in retail stores. Standard Cut* includes:

Leg	1 20 pound **Ham**; Fresh or **Cured/Smoked**; Whole, **Halved**, or Sliced
Loin	18-20 5/8"**Pork Chops**; **Bone-in**
Shoulder/Front Leg	2 3 pound **Roasts** and 4-6 **1" Shoulder Steaks**
Belly	3 pound **Rack of Ribs** and 10 pounds of **Cured/Smoked Bacon**, **Sliced**
Trimmings	20 pounds of **Ground Pork** from all trimmings deboned, ground, then mixed with a percentage of ground fat; prepared and packaged per customer choice as plain ground pork, or flavored sausage in a loose package or in small or large links (2 choices/half).

*All weights are approximate; numbers and poundage in each category vary with each hog.

Those who prefer certain cuts can choose the following remembering many are the same section of meat cut differently:

Leg - **Ham;** Fresh or **Cured/Smoked**; **Bone-in** or Boneless; Whole, **Halved**, or Sliced into steaks

Belly - **Bacon;** Fresh or **Cured/Smoked**; Whole or **Sliced** (**thin** or thick)
- **Spareribs**

Loin - **Pork Chops**; **Bone-in** or Boneless; ½, **5/8 (standard thickness),** ¾, 7/8, or 1" thick
- Loin Roast; Halved or Whole; Bone-in or Boneless
- "Baby"Back Ribs (are the bones from the pork loin, only available if pork chops or loin is boneless)
- Canadian Bacon Cured/Smoked (this product must be cured/smoked)

Shoulder/Front Leg (Boston Butt/Picnic Shoulder) - **Roast; Bone-in** or Boneless; **fresh** or cured/smoked
- **Blade Steaks**; ½, ¾, 7/8, or **1" (standard thickness)**
- Country-style Ribs; boneless only (replaces roasts)
- Hillbilly" Bacon; Cured/Smoked (this product must be cured/smoked); Whole or Sliced (replaces roasts)

Jowl - Fresh, Cured/Smoked; Whole, Sliced; if not indicated, jowl will be ground

Hocks - Fresh, Cured/Smoked; if not indicated, hocks will be deboned and ground

All meat trimmings from the hog including some of the fat will be used for ground pork and/or sausage. A ½ hog, processed by standard cut, generally yields about 20 -25 lbs. of sausage. For more ground pork and sausage, choose to grind one or more of the primal cuts. Any excess fat can be requested in whole pieces or ground.