

Outdoor Hog Management Assessment Tool—Ten Questions to Assess Your Operation

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As with any farming operation, it takes a lot of work to profitably raise hogs outdoors while maintaining productivity and protecting land and water resources. These “Ten Questions” are designed to help you evaluate your current management approach, identify practices that you will want to continue, and consider additional practices for improving your outdoor hog operation.

Please take a few minutes to answer each of the following questions. Circle the answer that most closely fits what you do on your farm. After you have finished answering the questions, you can compare your responses to the best management practices discussed in the companion document, “Ten Ideas for Improving Resource Management on Your Outdoor Operation.”

1) Which of the following best describes the way you water your hogs?

1

- A. Hogs use troughs, tubs or nipples that are moved to a different place from time to time within pens or pastures.
- B. Hogs use troughs, tubs or nipples that are permanently located in the same place in pens or pastures.
- C. Hogs use natural or man-made ponds or wallows located at random locations within pens or pastures.
- D. Hogs use natural water courses in some or all pens and pastures.

2) How would you describe the vegetation in the pens or pastures?

2

- A. Most areas have more than 75% ground cover except for a few feet around feeders, watering areas, shade and shelters.
- B. Most areas have between 50 to 75 % ground cover except for a few feet around feeders, watering areas, shade and shelters.
- C. Most pasture areas have less than 50% ground cover most of the time.
- D. The pasture rarely has vegetative ground cover.

3) How would you describe the way you make sure your hogs can stay adequately cool?

3

- A. I provide or encourage cooling of animals, using practices other than wallows, such as misters, shade and/or bedding.
- B. I encourage wallows in specific locations away from drainage channels or other sensitive environmental areas by providing water and/or shade in those spots.
- C. Hogs make cooling areas in low spots or near trees.
- D. I usually do not make any special arrangements for cooling purposes.

4) How many groups of “feeder to finishers” will you grow in the same pen or pasture before letting the pen or pasture have a break from hogs?

4

- A. One group.
- B. Two groups.
- C. More than three.
- D. I am not usually concerned about the number of groups that have been in the pen or pasture because I do not have other places that I put the hogs.

5) When you move hogs out of a pen or pasture, how long do you keep them off the site before you put a new group of hogs on it?

5

- A. More than 24 months.
- B. Between 12 and 24 months.
- C. Less than 12 months.
- D. I am not usually concerned with how long hogs have been off the site, especially if I need to use the pen or pasture.

6) After you remove hogs from a field what do you do with that field?

6

- A. Plant a forage crop to harvest for hay or a row crop or vegetable crop to harvest.
- B. Plant an annual or perennial forage crop **to graze**.
- C. Smooth the field to fill in wallows and disturbed areas; I may or may not plant anything.
- D. I let volunteer plants grow on the field.

7) How often do you take soil test samples in hog pastures or pens?

7

- A. Every year.
- B. Every 2-3 years.
- C. Every 4-10 years.
- D. I have not taken soil samples.

8a) How do you use vegetated buffers between your hog pens or pastures and drainage channels, streams, and wetlands?

8

- A. Buffer areas are protected from all livestock access at all times.
- B. Buffer areas are protected from hogs at all times, but other grazing livestock are allowed periodic access.
- C. Only hogs are allowed periodic access to buffer areas.
- D. All livestock are allowed periodic access to buffer areas.
- E. Hogs can access buffer areas at all times.
- F. All livestock can access buffer areas at all times.
- G. I do not provide vegetated buffers between hog pastures or pens and drainage channels, streams, or wetland areas.

8b) If you have vegetated buffers, what is the approximate average width?

_____ feet (please fill in the blank with your estimate)

8c) How would you rate your vegetated cover in the buffer area?

- A. Sparse
- B. Medium
- C. Lush

9) How do you manage trees or woodlots within hog pens or pastures?

9

- A. I limit the time that animals are exposed to the trees or I keep animal numbers low so that there is no damage to them.
- B. I only expose trees to animals in certain production phases so that damage is low (for example, during farrowing or between the weaning to feeder period).
- C. I use woodlots for any phase of hog production and I do not protect the trees.
- D. I do not use woodlots for hog production.

10) How do you decide how many hogs to raise in a particular pasture or pen?

10

- A. I use a set number per acre based on University or NRCS recommendations.
- B. I limit the number of hogs to prevent significant damage to the land and ground cover.
- C. I put as many hogs as I can feed and market easily.
- D. I do not think much about how many hogs to put on a piece of land.

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