

Pigs on Winetavern Farm

A little bit about Dermot:

I am based in West Wicklow, looking into the Wicklow Mountains with outdoor free-range rear breed pigs. I have a small farm and we have access to private woodlands all over Leinster.

Graduated from Pallaskenry Agricultural College in 1985 with a passion for pigs. I worked as a Dairy Farm Manager for a number of years. It wasn't until 2001 that we purchased our first two pigs which were the Tamworth Pig Breed for the freezer.

Over the next few years we experimented with different breeds. In 2010 we settled with the Oxford Sandy and Black Pig. We travelled to the UK and brought back 2 Gilts and a Boar. There are 13 female bloodlines and 4 male bloodlines of this breed and we have them all here on our farm.

As of today, we have 24 breeding Sows and 5 breeding Boars. The 5 Boars we have are in different woodlands around Leinster. The different Sows go to the different Boars depending on which bloodline we want to use. The Sows farrow here on Winetavern Farm and spend 8 weeks here with their piglets. After 8 weeks the piglets are weaned, and they are either sold or sent to a Eucalyptus forest to grow on. The Sow is sent to a different woodland for 3 months to run with a Boar which is not related. They forage in the woods with minimal concentrates and come back 3 weeks before farrowing.

Over a number of years, we have found that by giving the pigs access to 5 acres of woodlands at a time they clear the undergrowth and allow young saplings to emerge, which the pigs don't eat. The owners of the woodlands are happy and excited to have the pigs on their land. This not only benefits me (which allows me to have more pigs) but also benefits the landowner. Access to water is the most important factor in the woodlands, this means that we always have to setup a supply of water, if there is no streams or rivers.

We find that when the Sows come back to the Farm they are in the same condition as when they left. We also find that this prolongs the life and productivity of the Sow.

The pigs are healthy and disease free by roaming the woods in my opinion and live a much more natural life. We feel they look forward to returning to the woods after weaning.

Below are the different breeds we have had on our Farm, but the Oxford Sandy and Black breed is best suits to the woodlands. Other breeds may also work well.

I am Chairman of the Irish Pig Society and can be contacted on 087 2516623 or winetavernfarm@gmail.com

Oxford Sandy and Black – hardy, docile with lopped ears, good mothering ability, red with black spots, great starter pig.



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Tamworth – Closest to the now extinct Irish Grazer Breed, ginger and red in colour, not recommended for the first timer, great pork.



Saddleback – Large, deep, docile with lopped ears, large litters but progeny can run to fat, black with white band over shoulders



Duroc – Originally from America, partially drooped ears, large framed and muscle, feisty, not for the first timer, red in colour



Hampshire – Popular breed, erect ears, rapid growth, medium in size, black with white band over shoulders and front legs



Gloucester Old Spot – Active, hardy, docile with lopped ears, intelligent and prolific, white with defined black spots

