

November, 2012 Food For Thought

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Calendar

November 2-3: Farm Bureau Annual Meeting
Portsmouth, NH

www.nhfarmbureau.org

Attend workshops and check out our silent auction!

November 4-5: NH Science Teachers Association Fall

Greetings,

There are still a couple of months in 2012, but planning for our 2013 Agriculture Literacy program is underway. We have chosen a dairy theme and will use the book *Mini Milk Maids on the Mooove* by Rianna and Sheridan Chaney. This book is written from the perspective of twin sisters who visit a dairy farm and learn the process of how we get milk from cows. We look forward to engaging members of the dairy industry and other agricultural enthusiasts as we use literature to bring another farming theme into schools across the state. See the announcement section for how you can help with this project.

Resource packets for teachers are another way that we help educators integrate agriculture into their curriculum. In the past year we have updated several units including turkeys and Christmas trees which are particularly timely at this season. Each unit contains background information and activities that help address NH Science Frameworks. Contact us if you'd like to borrow one.

I also created a new multi-lesson resource packet called "NH Agricultural - Its History and Impact". The lessons explore 5 eras and 5 different farm products: The 1600's addresses Native Americans and early maple products; subsistence farming is explored during the 1700's; the great sheep boom is the focus of the 1800's unit; the 1900's review dairy history; and the late 20th century focuses on apples. Each of these units focuses on the period

Conference
Meredith, NH
www.nhsta.net

Attend our workshop -
The Science of Dairy

November 18-19: "The
Dust Bowl"

by Ken Burns
NH Public

TV www.nhptv.org

Watch this documentary
about an important
agriculturally related
event in our country's
history.

Pig Vocabulary

Boar - a male pig used
for breeding

Farrow - to give birth to
piglets

Gestation period - length
of time for babies to
develop, 3 months, 3
weeks and 3 days

Gilt - a female that has
not yet given birth to
piglets

Hog - a pig that is ready
for slaughter

Litter - a group of piglets
born at the same time,
usually 8-12.

Piglet - a baby pig

Pork - the meat that
comes from pigs

Sow - a female pig used
for breeding

Swine - a general term
used for the industry

when the commodity experienced a significant peak or event, but also covers the general history of each specific industry.

The packet includes 2-3 hands-on activities for each lesson. Extended learning opportunities and resources are also provided for those who wish to get more in-depth on a topic. The packet lists the social studies frameworks which are addressed with each lesson. If you would like to borrow one of these packets contact me at nhaic@nhfarmbureau.org or 224-1934. In-class programs and teacher workshops related to these topics can also be arranged. Contact me if you're interested in scheduling one of those.

Although October was National Pork Month, November is a month when many of us "pig out" so we are focusing on swine and pork information this month to raise awareness about pig farms in New Hampshire and beyond. It was interesting to gather resources about pigs. There are many fiction books with pig themes: *The Three Little Pigs*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Olivia* and more. Finding facts about pigs is more of a challenge. I went to the source. See my interview with Doreen Gitschier to learn about pig farming in NH.

Ruth

Ruth Smith, Statewide Coordinator
NH Agriculture in the Classroom

Pig Farming in NH

Doreen Gitschier and her family operate Gitch's Funny Farm on 34 acres in Hill, NH. Despite the name, the Gitschiers are very serious about the work they do to raise pigs, rabbits, chickens and turkeys. Doreen serves on the board of the NH Pork Producers Council and she and her children were presenters at the Belknap County School to Farm Day in September. She took some time to share a bit about why and how they raise pigs.

NHAITC: Why did you choose to raise pigs?

DG: Because they have real personalities, each pig is an individual, they are very social, and like interaction with humans, they are really smart and inquisitive.

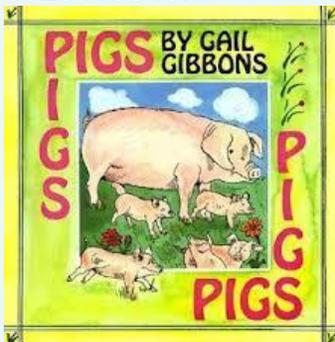
There are many ways that we use pig terms as slang. Below are a few. Brainstorm others with your students. Explore ideas why this animal has been the brunt of so many insults.

You pig = used to describe a slob
Pig out = to over eat
Pig Latin = a word game that translates words into a code; the origin is not known but Thomas Jefferson used it to write letters to friends.

Pig Resources

Books

Gibbons, Gail. *Pigs*. In typical Gibbons style, pig facts are presented in simple, straightforward ways. This provides good basic information and bold illustrations. For grades P-3. ISBN: 978-0823415540.



NHAITC: Doesn't that make them hard to slaughter?
DG: Most of them we don't keep that long. We raise around 400 piglets to sell to other farmers who raise them for market hogs. The piglets are sold when they are 8 weeks old. We keep our 30 breeding sows and 3 boars for 6-7 years. Sometimes we get attached but then I remember we're a business, not a petting zoo. We also raise about 50 market hogs that we sell for meat. That helps pay the grain bill during the winter.

NHAITC: How does your farm compare to other pig farms in NH and the US?

DG: We're one of the largest pig farms in NH because of our breeding herd, most farms don't over winter pigs. Raising pigs year round in NH is expensive because grain (corn & soy) must be imported from west.

NH producers really do it all. We don't have the infrastructure in this region, such as packing houses, like they do in the west and south. NH farmers must find their own markets for the meat. After we take our animals to a USDA slaughter facility in Massachusetts, we get the meat back and sell it directly to consumers at farmer's markets or from our farm. Some folks grow market hogs and sell them to restaurants but the grocery store market is supplied by the large farms from other regions.

NHAITC: What do you feed your pigs?

DG: The market hogs get 90% grain, seasonal vegetables like pumpkins and winter squash. The breeders get a wider variety including bread from local bakery. The 850 pound boars need a lot of carbohydrates to keep them full and happy!

NHAITC: Do pigs require any special treatment that is different from other livestock?

DG: Piglets require attention. They don't have fur so they usually need supplemental heat especially if it's below 50 degrees. The older animals are pretty easy though. They really are a lot of fun and keep us on our toes.

Pig Facts

Pigs have been on the earth for at least 40 million years.

Pigs were probably first domesticated in China.

In 1493, Christopher Columbus took 8 pigs on his voyage to Cuba.

Older, Jules. *Pig*. This is a lighthearted picture book that provides fun facts about pigs around the world and throughout time. For grades K-4. ISBN: 0-88106-109-3

Wolfman, Judy. *Life on a Pig Farm*. This book and its photographs illustrate what life on a Pennsylvania pig farm is like. The narration is told from the perspective of the sisters who raise pigs, show them at the 4-H fair and do all of the work required to keep them healthy. For grades 1-5. ISBN:1-57505-237-7

Websites

www.Pork4Kids.com

This site has information, activities and computer games related to pork and pigs.

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In 1539, the first pigs brought to North America arrived in Florida.

Other early explorers brought pigs to the "new world". By the end of the 1600's a typical colonial farmer owned 4-5 pigs.

Smoking and salting were early ways of preserving meat before there was refrigeration, this is how we end up with ham, bacon and salt pork.



During the war of 1812, a New York packer named Uncle Sam Wilson shipped several hundred barrels of salt pork to the American troops. Each barrel was stamped "U.S." That is how "Uncle Sam" came to represent the United States government.

Pig insulin was first used to treat human diabetics in the 1930s.

October is National Pork month

Pigs don't overeat or sweat.

Pigs raised on farms eat corn, wheat, soybeans and other grains.

When piglets are born they weigh about 2.5 pounds. When they are ready for slaughter they weigh at least 250 pounds.

Volunteers needed for Ag Literacy Program

The 2013 Agriculture Literacy program will be using the book *Mini Milk Maids on the Mooove* by Rianna, Sheridan and Rebecca Chaney to teach about dairy farming. As in the past, we will need volunteers to visit schools to read this book and share information about cows and the dairy industry. We'll provide resources for folks who aren't seasoned dairy farmers. We also are looking for teachers or school librarians who would like to host this enrichment program at your school. If you would like to help deliver or be a receiver of this program, please let us know. The Ag Literacy program begins in March but it's not too early to contact us.

