



Despite Many Transitions in Hogs And Industry, Future Bright For Show Pigs

"There've been lots of changes in hogs in my lifetime, but the hogs we're producing now are the best I've ever seen."

Since he started showing home-raised pigs when he was eight-years-old, Mike Bond is speaking from firsthand experience as he's seen and produced lots of pigs.

Today, with his wife, Debra, and assistance from their grown children, Brian, Kim and Leah, Bond specializes in show pig production at Valleybrook Farms near Overbrook in Osage County. Sister-in-law, Jo Davis, was also credited for her help.

Valleybrook has 35 sows in a twice-a-year farrowing, making it one of limited fulltime hog businesses remaining in Kansas. Growing up with hogs, so to speak, his dad, Bus Bond, was a widely known Duroc breeder for many years, and Mike and Debra followed in the business when they married in 1976.

"When the Duroc seed stock market went to pot, we were out of the hog business for 12 years," Bond calculated. However, their children continued to compete in junior swine shows with pigs purchased from other operations.



"In 1999, we kept back some of those top gilts, and started artificially breeding them, to again produce show pigs of our own," Bond explained. "We are still featuring Durocs, along with Yorkshires and crossbreds, and we have a couple of Berkshire and Hampshire sows."

Select production is marketed as seed stock, but "We really specialize in the show pig market," Bond related. "We have five boars that I collect to mate for my own use and also sell quite a bit of semen around the country."

Litters are spread throughout much of the year to fit different show dates in the Midwest. Pigs are merchandized in several different ways, of which the best, according to Bond, is the annual on-farm auction each spring.

Advertised on 580 WIBW, "This year's sale is April 13, and we'll offer about 75 pigs at that time," noted Bond.

Valleybrook Farms was a pioneer in merchandizing show pigs over the internet. "That's really worked out well for use since we started four years ago. We were the first ones doing on-line sales back then," Bond verified.

Best proof of success is when others mimic what one does, and that's exactly what happened to Valleybrook's internet sales. "We had an on-line sale February 14, and also have internet sales set May 9th and 30th, and June 20th, as well as in September, October and November," said Bond, noting that pigs are also sold private treaty, and at major consignment sales.

"Pig projects can be handled by youth with limited facilities and investment. They have a positive learning experience and enjoy being with others of similar interests. I only see more and more youth becoming involved in showing pigs," Bond forecast.



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Padre says:

"Trouble with experience, you get it after you needed it."