

Commodity Broker's Hobby Show Pig Production Turns Into Major Business



"Show pigs are a major commodity."

It's really an obvious statement, but generally one only thinks of market hogs, cattle and other farm production as "commodities."

Rick Gerlach of Gerlach Inc. – Commodity Futures & Option Brokerage, DeWitt, Nebraska, is a professional commodity broker, who has been involved in all phases of hog production and commodity trading. However, today "Show Pigs" gets equal billing with the more traditional commodity side of his operations.

"Show pigs are definitely a commodity," Gerlach contended. "We started raising show pigs as a hobby, and sideline to our commodity business, but show pig production is now a major business, too."

Growing up around hogs helping his grandpa, Gerlach remembered, "He kept his sows in those little square pens, and I had to lift the five-gallon buckets of feed and water over the top."

However, that was not a deterrent of an appreciation for the hog industry for Gerlach, who was a member of the livestock judging team at Northwest Missouri State. "Then, I decided I wanted to farm and came home, but there wasn't enough operation for me to be included. So, I became involved in the grain and feed business, and a variety of major ventures in the hog industry," Gerlach reflected.

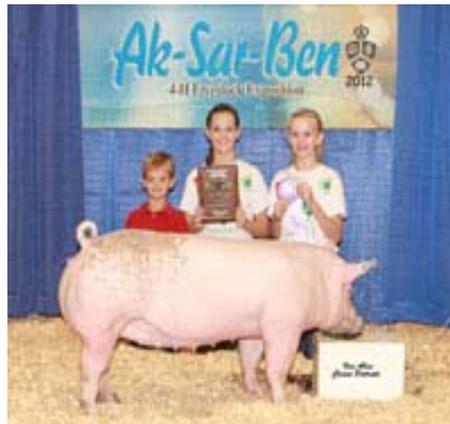
With his background in livestock, grain and feed sales, Gerlach worked for Data Transmission Network (DTN), selling market information, and, after completing a home study program, became a licensed commodity broker in 1989. Today, it's "Gerlach Inc. - Commodity Futures & Option Brokerage - Show Pigs."

With three adult sons who were successful showing home-raised hog champions, Gerlach is still closely involved with all phases of the show pig industry. "My wife, Amy, and I have three children, Bryar, Cheyenne and Savannah (shown with a home-raised champion), who exhibit hogs that we've produced at local and many major competitions throughout the Midwest," Gerlach said.

With 48 sows and 18 gilts including Duroc, York, Spot and crossbreds, "We sell about 75 percent of the pigs as show prospects. Our recent live sale at the farm was the best we've had. Our next spring sale, Saturday, April 27, will include an internet auction," Gerlach said. Both sales have been advertised and promoted heavily on 580 WIBW.

Admitting hogs have changed considerably, from "over conditioned to overly lean," Gerlach evaluated, "They're getting the pigs soft again, and they might get them too extreme again.

"But, the show pig business is the best it's ever been, and it will continue getting better," Gerlach forecasted



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what you have
while working
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want."*