

We will be starting soon!

While you are waiting, please introduce yourself in the chat bar



FACT
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

Meishan Hogs 101



Introductions



Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that works to ensure that all food-producing animals are raised in a humane and healthy manner.



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FACT's services to support livestock and poultry farmers include:

- **Conference scholarships** (ongoing)
- **Customized handouts** (ongoing)
- **Free webinars + short courses** (ongoing)
- **Humane Farming Mentorship** (apply in fall 2023)
- **Fund-a-Farmer Grants** (applications available in fall 2023)

Laura Jensen, Bio

Laura Jensen, The Pig Nerd, Mrs. Meishan.

AMBA President

Owner - Jensen Reserve

Owner, Meishan Preservation



I wear many hats and love every one of them!

- Lead the Meishan recovery effort since 2016. I was first to identify a retail cuts pathway for the registered hogs in my retail store.
- Built a multi licensed USDA inspected butcher shop & charcuterie shop on my farm & opened my Retail Store Front in 2017.
- Developed our proprietary American Charcuterie Style Carcass Breakdown & Licensed Curing Processes for Retail Sales
- Then, became steward of the foundation herd & breed association Registrar & President in 2020.
- In 2021, my husband and I worked tirelessly to deliver over 100 hogs nationally. This was a turning point for the future of the registered Meishan hog.
- Living east of Atlanta, GA with my husband and daughters, I maintain my own herd of registered Meishans and host classes in my USDA inspected butcher shop I built in my barn. The remaining 3 foundation hogs live on my farm as well.

History of the Meishan Hog

- 5,000 Years Old, possibly the oldest breed of hog in the world
- Reserved for the Emperors of China
- US stock imported from the Taihu region of China in the late 80's

That stock was split into **3 research herds**.

Because of documented genetic drift, those 3 research facilities became the name of the hogs that came from each of them.

Those 3 research facilities have become the breed association line names today.

They are:

- 1) University of Illinois (Illinois - UI in Herdbook)
- 2) USDA Meat Research Center (USDA - in herdbook too)
- 3) Iowa State (Iowa - IS in herd book)

The Meishan a medium sized lard carcass hog.

Taihu pigs are prized in China and Japan for their succulent marbled meat and superior lard and fat quality.



Breed Characteristics

- Lard Hog
- Medium sized hog
- Adult weights vary from 350-550
- Reach puberty at approximately 11 weeks
- Litter sizes range from 9-19 piglets
- Meishans typically have 16-20+ teats allowing them to easily raise suckling piglets.
- They are a very sedentary and docile pig which allowed them to be raised in smaller areas with minimal environmental impact on pastures and woodlots.
- Under the agreement between the USDA and China the Meishans were restricted to use in research facilities or zoo's until the prolificacy experiments were concluded.



The Breed Association Status



The American Meishan Breeders Association was formed in 2016.

The 1st hogs were registered in 2017.

- It was a challenging start when there were very few people that had ever heard of the Meishan.
- Rico Silvera founded the AMBA & held the original foundation herd at his farm in TN until April 2020.
- In April of 2020, the foundation herd moved to my farm and Meishan Preservation was formed to represent my live hog operation. Rico retired from hogs.
- I became AMBA President in October of 2020.
- In my time as President, I have delivered over 150 hogs, marking the turning point of the future of the Meishan.
- The Registry is about to register hog 700.

Critically Endangered Status

With the AMBA founded on 12 hogs, there was a distinct possibility that the Meishan may not thrive or even make it in the US.

Why thrive, not recover?

- The Meishan had never thrived in America, only in China. They had never been here in that capacity
- Although the hogs have a lot to offer the US, there is not a pathway to recreate.
- Many of us committed to their success have tirelessly worked to establish a pathway in the US.

Thankfully, The Livestock Conservancy recognized this danger of failure as well and fast tracked the registry & it's pigs to a Critically Endangered Status.

In the Spring of 2018, The Livestock Conservancy declared the Meishan hog "Critically Endangered."

The breed is still recognized as that & will remain there until a 3-5 year consistent growth pattern evolves.



Is All Meishan Stock the Same?

No.

There are 2 perspectives on this.

1- When working with the 3 lines identified by the AMBA, there can be differences in litter sizes and grow out weights depending on your genetic combination.

For example, the large litters and largest frames tend to have Illinois & USDA backgrounds. And, heavier USDA only lines can produce smaller litters.

2- The stock pre AMBA is not the same. The new genetics release in 2016 was a turning point for the future of the Meishan. Having worked with both, the new stock is far superior to anything prerelease. From hanging weights to ham sizes, pre AMBA stock simply can't compete.

How to Feed the Meishan for Success

The Meishan needs a consistent feed.

Contrary to some information on the market, the Meishan can not thrive and achieve it's potential, yet, without a consistent ration of feed.

Breeding stock should also be fed a balanced hog ration for their breeding life.

- Cover crops have not yet been identified as a suitable method to feed the Meishan for success.



What Can I Feed Them?

There are several 'schools of thought' on feed and hogs...

1- A balanced hog feed consistently.

- The Meishan needs a low fat and low fiber feed with as high a protein as you can get.

2- Feeding veggie/ food bank scraps alone.

- This can work but add a hog specific vitamin & mineral blend to your breeding stocks diet.

3- Forage, Fiber & Cover Crops

- The combination has not been identified as the ideal means of feeding the Meishan.

How do I raise my Meishan hogs?

Like most member breeders, I am raising the Meishan on pasture.

My opinion is that a lard hog needs our support in creating muscle...they can create fat just fine!

So, walking on pasture & grazing promotes muscle.

- There are some farms raising them in barns who are achieving results that work for their model too.



Temperament - What Does Docile Really Mean?

There are 2 perspectives on this...

1- After handling large breed hogs that were going to eat us, the Meishan is easy peasy! Yeah, they grouse and posture, but I keep all my fingers and stay alive!

2- New to pigs and livestock...and usually breeding, a grumpy grumbly pig is scary and I don't want to deal with it.

Each are very valid and I have seen both types of customers try the Meishan.

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Ultimately, the Meishan is an excellent read of energy and, if you're scared, they will assume they need to be too.

The Meishan makes you earn their trust too. It may take months of marshmallows and time around them to get that belly rub.

Breeding Practices for Success

I've learned the hard way that there are some things required to be successful at breeding.

1. Pairing boars & sows together for 45 days to ensure 2 heat cycles are covered
2. Vaccinate
3. Use farrowing stalls with rails, no cages
4. Dip umbilical cords on babies in the 1st 48 hours
5. Have a well stocked medical kit
6. Give yourself grace because breeding of any kind has high & low points

What is the meat like?

Yes, the Meishan carries it's own flavor profile.

- And a deep red color with micromarbling.
- My retail store customers compare it to beef more than pork.
- It does best when cooked low and slow
- Meishan Coppa Roast featured
- Photo credit James Patton at my Master Class



What is the carcass value?

For me, that's a 2 part answer.

In my retail store as raw cuts, it's over \$2500

As cured cuts, it's over \$6,000



When Do I Process & What are My cuts?

I have found that processing hogs between 13-15 months gives me the best results for my business model.

Hanging weights are 300-330 pounds, on average. That increases my retail value significantly.

Specialty Cuts:

My husband and I developed our own American Charcuterie style carcass breakdown.

Hams are left as primals for prosciutto that I make. The ribs are cut at a different spot to pull whole coppa muscles, other cuts like belly/ loins/ etc go to charcuterie or raw cuts, depending on stock levels.

How to Market the Meishan

Marketing is one of the biggest funnels to success.

If you're new to Meishans or farming in general, the 3 rules I suggest are:

1. Identify a Market
 - a. This means, what is the pricing & pork availability in your area
 - b. How does your marketing plan fit in?
2. Develop a Strategy
 - a. Sales don't just happen.
 - b. How will you build your business?
 - c. Can you move through X # of piglets? How?
3. Implement your Plan
 - a. What are the requirements to make 1 & 2 happen?
 - b. How do you acquire customers?
 - c. Whats your pork availability schedule?

What's the Future of the Meishan?

Bright! VERY Bright!

The association is growing by leaps and bounds.

More and more people now know about the Meishan.

Additional pathways are developing around the country with member breeders.

There's a core group of committed AMBA members, all determined to share their love and success with others!

My retail sales for charcuterie and cuts are ever growing too.

We are making a difference!

Find Us on Social Media

American Meishan Breeders Association

American Meishan Breeders Association Forum

Make Mine Meishan....Pigs!

Are all groups supported by our amazing breeder network.



Leading the Conservation Effort with:

Established a Retail Sales pathway through my retail store:



Through my live hog operation, I turned around the recovery effort in 2021 delivering over 100 registered hogs nationally. Home of the remaining foundation herd for the AMBA.

Became President of the breed association in October 2020 with 300%+ growth since.



Launched consulting business in 2022 to help farmers navigate the food business.

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to Larissa and the team at FACT! They have continuously supported my work and others!

And THANK YOU for taking the time to attend!

~laura

Photo: USDA Ming, foundation boar, smiling for the camera. Photo cred Summer A.



Questions?

Please type into the Q & A tab



Connect with **FACT**

Food Animal Concerns Trust

Upcoming webinars

- 🐔 **February 14:** Story Brand Marketing for Local Meat with Pork Rhyne
- 🐔 **February 20:** Katahdin Sheep: A Versatile Breed for Pasture and Silvopasture *(with Steve Gabriel)*
- 🐔 **February 28:** 5 Steps to Protect your Farm, Legally Speaking with Farm Commons
- 🐔 **March 15:** Selling Direct-to-Customer Whole and Half Pastured Hogs
- 🐔 **March 20:** Restoring and Maintaining Riparian (Water) Areas in a Grazing System *(with Steve Gabriel)*

Grants, Scholarships, Training, Mentorship & More!

- 🐔 **Scholarships to conferences, workshops and training events** – *ongoing*
- 🐔 **Short courses** – *free and more courses in development*
- 🐔 **Customized handouts** on the nutritional benefits of food from pastured animals

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