

Reference guide for ear notching in swine

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Ear notching is a very traditional method of identification in swine in which pigs are identified based on their birth order within a given farrowing. The pig's right ear is the Litter Ear (where the litter number is notched) and the pig's left ear is the Individual Pig Ear (where the pig number within the litter is notched). Pigs within the same litter will all have the same litter number, but will have different pig numbers. Ear notching is a permanent form of identification that if done correctly, will provide identification for the pig's entire life.

Because ear notching is the enrollment ID for 4-H swine enrollment in Indiana, it is imperative for 4-H members and their families to understand the ear notching system and be able to read the ear notches of their pigs to be able to properly enroll their 4-H swine projects.

Since confusion over which ear is the "left ear" can easily occur depending on viewing the pig from the front or the rear, a good way to remember which is the left ear is to always look the pig in the face. Then, if read left-to-right, it would always be litter number then pig number. See Figure 1 below.

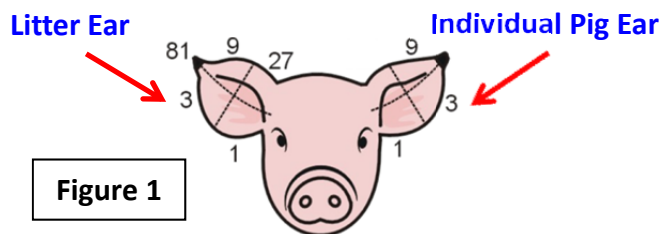


Figure 1

There are five designated zones (1, 3, 9, 27, and 81) in the Litter Ear and three designated zones (1, 3, and 9) in the Individual Pig Ear. In zones 1, 3, 9, and 27, there can only be two notches, thus if there are two notches in all 4 zones, that would represent Litter 80. Then a notch in zone 81 basically doubles the system. It is just a matter of counting the number of notches in a given zone and then adding up the numbers represented by the notches. It is important to recognize that pigs are typically referred to as pig 1-3 (litter 1, Pig 3) or 9-5 (litter 9, pig 5). See Figure 2 below.

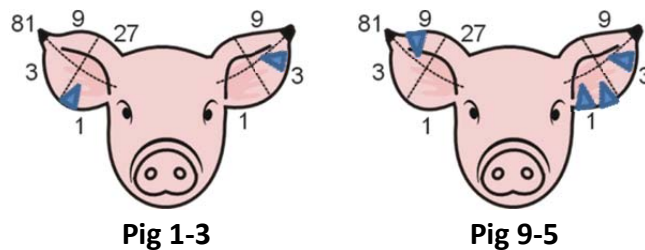
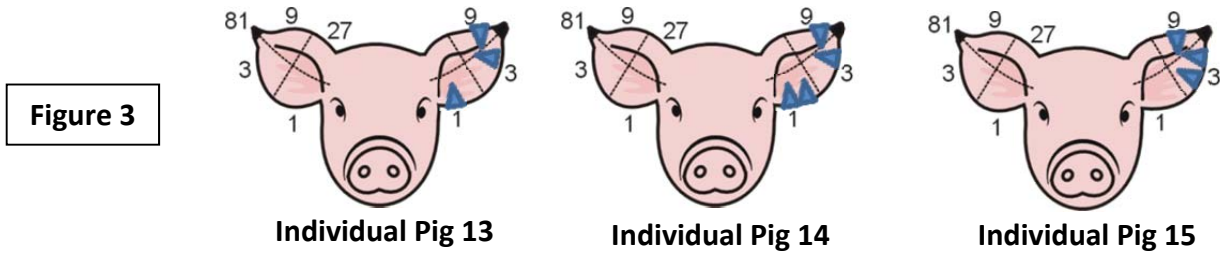


Figure 2

The following pages provide examples of appropriately notched pigs 1-12 from litters 1-161. Figure 3 below shows how individual pigs 13, 14, and 15 would be notched within a given litter.



For more assistance with ear notching or other 4-H animal enrollment issues, please contact Aaron at the below contact information.

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