

Needle and Sharp Usage

General Protocol

- The animal care practices on this farm may require the use of needles to administer injectable medications to the animals.
- The caretaker responsible for providing the animals with these treatments must be well trained in the needle use guidelines.
- The two most commonly used injection methods are:
 - » **Intramuscular** – in the muscle
 - » **Subcutaneous** – under the skin
- Proper needle size (including length and gauge) should always be used
- Once a pig has received an injectable treatment, it should be identified according to farm protocol and the medication treatment record should be completed.

Needle size (length and gauge)

The appropriate needle size is based on the age of the pig. Farm staff should refer to Table 1 to determine what size needle should be used to give injectable treatments.

Table 1. Needle Length and Gauge

Age group	Intramuscular	Subcutaneous
Breeding stock	16- or 14-gauge, 1 1/2" length	16-gauge, 1 1/2" length
Finishers	16-gauge, 1" length	16-gauge, 3/4" length
Nursery pigs	18- to 20-gauge, 3/4" length	18- to 20-gauge, 5/8" length
Baby pigs	18- to 20-gauge, 1/2" length	Not applicable

Proper Injection Protocols

- Clean all injection equipment and make sure it is well maintained, and properly stored on the farm.
- Prior to use, check needles for chips, cracks, burrs, or bends. Discard the needle in the sharps container if it is determined to be unusable. Take care to inspect the hub of the needle to ensure it can properly attach to the syringe.
- Properly restrain animals at the time of application.
- Inject into a clean, dry area (See Figure 1).
- Change needles when appropriate to maintain cleanliness and sharpness.
- If a needle is bent, change it immediately and do not use for further injections. Do not straighten bent needles for reuse.
- Always retrieve dropped needles.



Figure 1. Proper needle placement for intramuscular injections for pigs.





Intramuscular injection location

- Always use the correct size of needle and evaluate the needle prior to usage for strength and sharpness. (See Figure 2.)
- Inject into a clean, dry area on the pig.
- Inject in the neck area, just behind the ear and in front of the shoulder.
- The needle should go into the muscle layer of the pig, prior to dispensing medication.
- Do not inject into the ham or loin area of a pig unless instructed to do so by the farm veterinarian. This method may cause scarring or blemishes in the meat products.
- Follow the medication records protocol set by the farm after dispensing any medications to the animals.

Subcutaneous injection location

- Always use the correct size of needle and evaluate the needle prior to usage for strength and sharpness.
- Inject into a clean, dry area on the pig.
- For pigs small in size, inject in the flank area of the pig, just under the skin, without breaking into the muscle layer. Hold the needle at an angle to ensure proper insertion method.
- For larger pigs, give the injection in the area behind the ear, in the loose skin found there.
- If a subcutaneous injection is needed for the farrowing sow, give it in the side of the vulva.
- Follow the medication records protocol set by the farm after dispensing any medications to the animals.

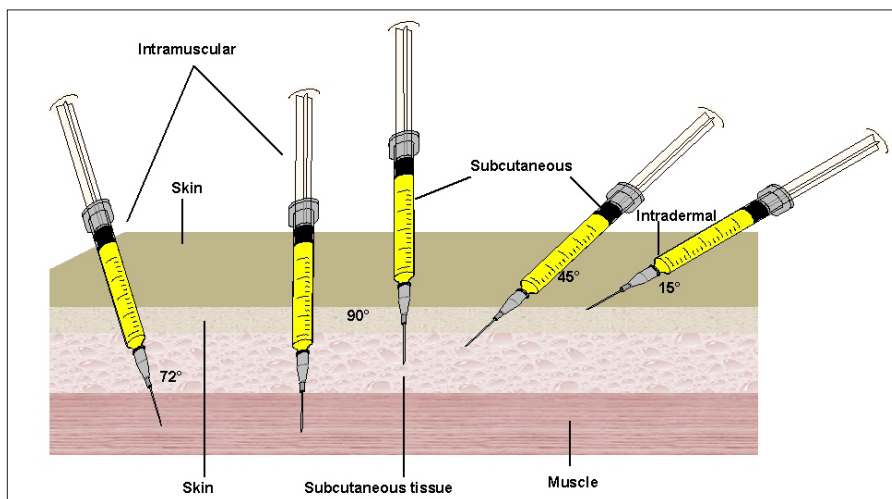


Figure 2: Comparing intramuscular and subcutaneous injections.

How to identify a pig at risk of carrying a broken needle

- Identify the animal immediately; this can be done temporarily by using spray paint or a marker.
- If the broken needle is visible, attempt to remove it.
- Provide permanent identification of the animal if not done initially.

**How to identify a pig at risk of carrying a broken needle (continued)**

- Record information regarding the broken needle event. This includes animal identification and location, activity that resulted in a broken needle, approximate location of the needle, size and brand of needle, and the person giving the injection.
- Communicate with the packer regarding potential for the pig carrying a broken needle. Include animal identification and approximate area where the needle is lodged.

Needle and Sharps Disposal Methods

- All needles and sharps (including scalpels) should be properly disposed of according to medical waste regulations for the state.
- Place sharps into the predetermined sharps container.
 - » The container should be rigid and puncture resistant with a lid or cap.
 - » Label the sharps container “Sharps” with large, readable lettering.
 - » Acceptable containers include laundry detergent bottles, coffee cans, and similar containers.
- Once the container is full, place the lid or cap on the container and tape it shut using heavy tape such as duct tape.
- The “Sharps” label should remain visible.
- Place the container into a trash receptacle and send it to a commercial landfill.



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