With higher meat prices there is more interest in home-raising pigs for pork. One pig for a small family of three to four (two pigs for larger families) should take care of most of your pork needs. A freezer is a must.

In Alaska, persons wishing to produce their own pork at home should buy feeder pigs — also called weaner pigs — in the spring and feed them out to market weight during the warmer summer months. Some of the advantages are as follows:

1. Housing requirements are minimal. A calf hutch-type structure is ideal for two to three pigs.
2. Supplying feed and water is much easier and requires less labor.
3. Turnover is fairly rapid — four to five months.
4. Lice are less of a problem outdoors.
5. Pigs can be used as 4-H and FFA project animals.

What Size Pig Should You Buy?
There are many different breeds of pigs available in Alaska. All with good breeding will produce high quality pork for home use. Weaner pigs that weigh around 40 pounds are considered ideal for home pork production.

Male feeder pigs should be castrated. This way, male and female pigs can be mixed without undesired results. Even if you are not planning to mix male and female pigs, this forethought may prove beneficial for future operations.

How Much Feed Is Required?
This is one of the first questions you need to answer before buying the pigs.

It will take about 3½ pounds of feed to make 1 pound of gain. If you buy a 40-pound pig and feed it to an average market weight of 210 pounds, you put on 170 pounds of gain. 170 pounds of gain × 3.5 pounds of feed = 595 pounds of feed per pig.

It is recommended that premixed commercial feed be used for home pork production. Although that is somewhat more expensive, you do receive a balanced ration that has all the ingredients needed for a growing pig. There has been much discussion among farmers and industry representatives concerning the feeding of fish and crab meal to swine. Research conducted at the Alaska Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station shows that marine by-products can be fed to swine, but there are limitations. People wishing to mix their own feed should contact their local Extension agent for further information.

Equipment Needed
1. Waterer — Rubber buckets in an old tire work well.
2. Self feeder — Although these are rather expensive ($75 to $100), they will probably pay for themselves if you are feeding three to four pigs, since feed waste is reduced.
3. Plywood calf hutch-type housing plus a fenced-in area for exercise — The fence should be woven wire with a board around the bottom of the inside for reinforcement. Pigs will sometimes root holes under fences, and these must be repaired before the pigs get free. You need 60 square feet of space per pig.