

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FETAL PIG

For most students, this is their first major dissection. A few words of introduction are in order.

The fetal pigs are unborn animals. In processing the sows (mature female swine) for meat, the *uterine horns* often reveal unborn litters. These are removed and made available for biological study. Note the *umbilical cord* of your specimen. There are usually 7 to 12 young in a single litter.

### Determination of the Age of the Fetal Pig

The age of the fetal pig is determined by its length. Measure body length along the back following the natural curvature of the spine from the tip of the snout to the base (the start) of the tail, not to its tip. Use a string for this. The actual length is determined by measuring the string with a centimeter ruler.

Refer to the following table which relates the body length to the number of days of gestation. Convert the *centimeter* values shown in the first column to *millimeters* and enter these in the second column.

LENGTH OF FETUS		APPROXIMATE AGE (days)
cm	mm	
1.1		21
1.7		35
2.8		49
4.0		56
22.0		100
30.0		Full term 112-115

The fetal pig assigned to you measures \_\_\_\_\_ cm (\_\_\_\_\_ mm) in length. It seems to be approximately \_\_\_\_\_ days old.

Two students will share one specimen and will be responsible for it till the end of the course.

### The Domestic Pig

Domestic hogs belong to the same species as the European wild hog, *Sus scrofa*. They belong to the *Order Artiodactyla* (even-toed hoofed mammals) which includes such varieties as cattle, sheep, goats, deer, camels, giraffes, and hippopotamuses.

*Sus scrofa* is *omnivorous* like man, feeding both on plant and animal matter. The *body temperature* of an adult pig is slightly higher than that of man. The life span of the pig is 15 to 20 years. There are many biochemical similarities between man and pig (composition of body fluids, specific enzymes, etc.). Pigs are valuable experimental animals for the study of effects of drugs and radiations. A "mini-pig" has been developed for this purpose; it weights 100-150 pounds when fully grown, rather than the 900 pounds reached by some domestic breeds (e.g., Yorkshire).