

A SHELTER'S GUIDE TO THE PET PIG



A Shelter's Guide to The Pet Pig

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Introduction

History - Problem - Solution



HISTORY

Potbellied and other miniature pigs belong to the family of domestic pig called the *Sus Scrofa Domestica*. They are often referred to as the “Canadian mini-pig.” The Vietnamese potbellied pig almost became extinct during the WWII famine in China. Some of the refugees brought pigs north with them, and then in the 1950's, some were brought into Europe for zoos. They were systematically bred in Sweden in the mid 1960's because they created good laboratory size animals with organs and vital functions similar to humans.

In the 1970's, Keith Connell went to Europe to import unique pigs for the Canadian zoos. Later in the mid 1980's they came to the United States and became household pets. Because of the strict import laws in the United States, our gene pool for the potbellied pig is still relatively small compared to their cousins, the farm hogs. The Vietnamese Potbellied pigs soon became the pet of the 80's called the “Yuppy Puppies.”

THE PROBLEM

These creatures, originally from the jungles of Vietnam (hence the name, “Vietnamese Potbellied Pig”), were first imported to the U.S. in the mid 1980s. There were very few of them, and those that were available were quite expensive (several thousands of dollars!). They were highly touted as the ultimate companion pet, and soon, breeders were coming out of the woodwork, anxious to cash in on this popular new pet.

Thousands of people across the country became “pet pig parents”, assured by the sellers that the pigs would stay small, could adapt to any environment, and were low maintenance. Sadly, it didn't take long before many of these folks figured out that they'd been terribly misled!

According to “Pigs A Sanctuary” in West Virginia there were over 200,000 pet pigs living in American homes in 1998. That's a lot of pigs, and a lot of humans who either love them like we've come to expect people will love their pet cat or dog – or - who like some cat and dog owners are irresponsible, and don't care for the creature whose welfare they've committed to take care of.

Pigs, in case you are not already familiar with the species, are a particularly intelligent and clean animal. They have suffered a VERY bad press throughout history due to frequently having been unfortunate enough to find themselves in situations, dictated by humans. They could not behave as they would in their natural habitat. Given the opportunity to do so, pigs will from birth differentiate between sleeping, eating and toilet areas. They are

affectionate and sensitive creatures, easy to train to walk on a harness and leash, do “tricks” and generally bring fun and companionship into their humans’ lives.....and no, they DON’T smell, unless they’re kept in unsatisfactory conditions!

Sadly, just as has happened with cats and dogs, pigs are now becoming “victims of their own success” – approximately 25% to 40% of American pet pigs find themselves in Sanctuaries, unwanted, abandoned, abuse-victims; or the victims of broken homes or unemployment or simply suffering rejection because their owner only cared for them while they were a cute little piglet. They had not taken the trouble to research what living with a full-size pig involved.



Although potbellied pigs are considered miniature pigs (compared to a normal farm hog, who can reach weights in excess of 1000 pounds), their average weight at maturity is between 90 and 150 pounds, depending on genetics, lifestyle, etc. This is a far cry from the “20-30 pounds mature weight” that many pig owners were promised by the seller. Also, a pig is a unique creature, and has very specific needs in terms of its care and environment. Many owners were unaware of, and unprepared for, these needs, and when the pig became aggressive or otherwise difficult to handle, they were dumped at the nearest animal shelter, or simply abandoned to fend for themselves. Pigs are very prolific and when left intact, breed and give birth every 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days to a litter ranging in size from six to eight.

Unscrupulous breeders and uninformed buyers continue to add to the many thousands of potbellied pigs who are neglected, abused and abandoned. If these pigs are lucky, they end up at a sanctuary or are adopted into a good home. But many of them wind up at livestock auctions, where they are sold for pennies per pound for slaughter. Please keep in mind that many of these pigs were once household pets who were housebroken, did tricks, and rode in the family car! It is a very sad situation, made worse due to the fact that the public is generally unaware that such a problem even exists.

Solution

Fortunately, there is a growing contingent of people who are committed to rescuing, rehabilitating, and finding good homes for many of these homeless pigs. Pigs As Pets Association, Inc. works diligently to educate people about these wonderful creatures. Pigs are very special animals, and it takes a very special type of person to become a caretaker for a 100-200 lb. animal with the intelligence and curiosity of a 2-year old child! Our goal is to educate people *BEFORE* they get a potbellied pig, so that they are prepared for the responsibility, or so that they realize they’re not!

As part of our education process, we sponsor a yearly symposium that is designed to educate potbellied pig owners, sanctuaries and animal shelters, and veterinarians. This symposium is especially beneficial to veterinarians, because actual surgical and other medical procedures are performed at nearby animal clinics or universities by veterinarians who specialize in potbellied pigs. Many vets have little or no experience with regard to potbellied pigs, because they are still generally considered to be livestock rather than the exotic pet that they truly are. As a result, many pigs die unnecessarily each year.

We promote spaying and neutering of all pet pigs. It not only makes them a better pet but helps to control over population, tumors and other health problems that are occurring in the pet pig. More pigs are dumped because people do not realize the need to spay and neuter. Male piglets become fertile in just 52 days and begin breeding mamma and siblings and other pigs in the herd. It is at this time that the males develop a stench and causes people to just dump them. Our organization is working to not only educate but to spay/neuter pet pigs so that they will be good pets and stay in their homes. We work nationally to accomplish this task by finding veterinarians who can and will spay/neuter and then to get the owners to take them in. Unlike dogs and cats, the cost of spay/neutering is relatively high and a lot of people can't afford to have it done. So we are working to see that they have a way to afford it. Here is where shelters can play a big part in helping to keep the pig in its home once it has been adopted.

We appreciate shelters that work to educate and to also include the pet pig in their spay/neuter program and who work to ensure the person adopting a pig from them, has all the needed educational materials to make sure the pig is getting a proper home.



PART I

UNDERSTANDING THE PET PIG



Basic Needs of Pigs

Water

Unlike dogs and cats, pigs can't sweat and they stress more easily than most animals. The only sweat glands that a pig has is right on top the snout and they are very small.

This is the reason that pigs like water and mud holes to lay in. Mud would be their first choice for two reasons. One, it allows them to cool off when they get too warm and the other is that the mud protects the skin from the sun and getting sunburn and also as a conditioner for the skin. Much like a human mud facial. It also helps to control parasites they may pick up from the ground.

If your shelter houses the pigs outside, you should either be sure they have the mud hole at all times or supply them with a pool. Such as a child's wading pool to lay in to cool off when the weather is hot. Also be sure that plenty of shade is supplied by either building pens under shade trees or by using shade materials or roofing to ensure they don't have to lay in the sun for long periods of time causing them to sunburn and dehydrate.



If your shelter houses the pigs on the inside where air conditioning is available, then you won't have the need for a pool. If you see them tipping their water bowls to lay in, it is a sure sign they are too warm and need a pool or mud hole.

Be aware that out in the wild, pigs would urinate and defecate in water to hide their scent so the water for cooling off should be changed on a regular basis.

The picture at the left shows an inadequate kennel at a shelter.



Nesting and Rooting

Pigs love to nest and build nests to sleep in. Hay provides this for them. Especially if housed on concrete. Also blankets are used. Most house pigs have been used to blankets and it eases the stress if you can provide one or two for them. Pigs will spend hours entertaining themselves by rearranging hay or blankets.

If you are keeping pigs on the inside on concrete, it is best to put down a rubber mat to cushion the shock on their bones. Although concrete helps to keep the hooves trimmed it is not natural for them to live on it. Rubber mats are idea in this type of pen and can be easily washed or hosed off.

Pigs are rooters by nature and should not be discouraged from doing so. It is in the dirt that they receive minerals and vitamins that they need. In the wild they would eat grub worms and other bugs and insects. Part of them rooting in hay and blankets help to fulfil this natural instinct.

If you pick up a pig or one is turned in from the owner that has a nose ring, please have it removed. Although these rings were made to curtail rooting, remember this is a natural instinct and must not be discourage if you want the best for the pig. It also can damage the snout. Also remember that the only sweat glands a pig has is at the top of the snout and you don't want to hurt or damage these glands.

Introducing or putting strange pigs together

Pigs are herd animals by instinct. This means that like other hierarchal animals, they will fight to establish their hierarchy. This should not be allowed in small enclosed areas, such as shelter pens. If they must be put together in a small area, you should watch and break up any fight that gets to vicious. Remember this is a natural instinct but sometimes it can get really vicious. You can use a sorting board to help separate. *Never use your hands or legs as they can make a mistake and bite you.* Pig bites can be nasty and get infected easily. If you have side by side pens you can put them in so that they can smell each other through the wire, it will help them adjust to each other more quickly. If you have a large outside pen, then it should be fine to put them in together. But expect the fighting until the hierarchy is set.

Have your vet monitor any bites that a pig may receive. Pigs have an amazing quality for healing. Sometimes to much so and they heal over from the outside and then you have an abcess begin on the inside. Make sure the bite stays open and heals from the inside out. Bag Balm is great for most pig bites and aids in healing.

Spoiled house pigs may become very depressed upon being released to the shelter. Some even become angry so be careful when taking in a pig that just might turn on you out of depression or anger.

Pigs are social animals and usually love to interact with each other and with people. They love being scratched and will usually drop for a tummy rub once they know you don't mean them harm. Never hit a pig to correct it. Use a sorting board to direct the pig and show you are in control and that you are "Top Hog."

More Than One Type of Pig

The rule of thumb on the difference between a farm hog and a pig is that a pig can weigh up to 300 lbs while a hog will weigh more than 300 lb at maturity. More and more types of miniature pigs are showing up so be prepared to recognize them as it will help when you adopt them out.



Vietnamese Potbellied Pig

Although when they first came over they weighed more than 200 lbs at maturity, breeders have been able to breed them down. Average size at maturity is 90 to 150 lb and they grow until a little over 3 yrs old. The average height is 17 to 20 inches at the shoulders and average length is 35 to 42 inches from the top of his head to the base of this tail at maturity. He will have a straight tail and a slightly swayed back.

Other types of miniature pigs now in the US is South Pacific Nesting pigs (about like a potbellied pig in size but some what smaller) and Kune Kune pigs from New Zealand (can range in size from 200 to 350 lbs at maturity) and the African Pygmy Pig (size at maturity is from 100 to 150 lbs and longer than a potbellied pig)

Domestic Farm Hog

They come in a variety of colors and sizes and can range in weight at maturity from 300 lbs to well over a 1000 lbs and have a curly tail. They are usually very gentle by nature and although large at maturity are called “gentle giants” although there are exceptions to all rules.

Wild hogs



Wild feral can range is a variety of colors and sizes. They have long snouts and long legs and usually have a straight tail or with only one curl in it. They can weigh up to 300 lbs but in captivity can grow much larger. One very colorful type is the Osobaw Island Pig from Osobaw Island Georgia. These are usually very colorful but some are black. They carry a variety of spots and their snouts are longer and thinner than our normal feral pigs.

Always use caution when dealing with a strange pig no matter what type it is. They can be very temperamental and react quickly. Treat them with respect and you'll soon learn when they have begun to trust you and know that you'll do them no harm. All types can make excellent pets for the right people.

Catching a Stray Pig

You get a call that a pig has been spotted out in a subdivision or highway. You get there and it runs and you can't get close to it. How will you catch it? Here are some simple rules to remember.

- Stay calm. Remember, chasing a pig will get you no where.
- Get your game plan and man power together BEFORE leaving the shelter.
- Have food and equipment ready.
- Don't be in a hurry, as it WILL slow you down and can put the pig in harms way.

Building a pen

If space and time permits it is always best to build a pen out of hog panels and T-posts leaving one end open and placing a trail of food into the pen. Once he is comfortable with coming into the pen to eat, you can just close it in

Kennel Crate

If in a small area that you can corner the pig up in, then you can use a kennel, preferably an X-large or Giant (700 series Veri Kennel). Here is where sorting boards come in handy. You can purchase "sorting boards" or make them out of plywood. This way you can just herd the pig in close and steer the pig into the kennel.

Never put him in facing the back unless he will have room to turn around. A simple way is to get the pig cornered and then put a bucket over his head. This will cause him to back up and you can back him right into the

kennel for the least amount of stress. You will need someone to stand close and be ready to pick up his back legs and help them over the lip of the kennel.

Also *never* put him in a kennel without a rubber mat on the floor of it or with hay so that he doesn't slip and slide around and hurt himself in transport. Another safety precaution is to use a bungee-cord around the door. Some frightened pigs have been known to charge the door hard enough to take it right out and away they go.

Two things to always remember, especially about a potbellied pig. *Never* pick a pig up by the back feet. One wrong turn and a potbellied pig can snap its back right in to. Also be careful of sows with babies, as they will charge and bite to protect their young. This is common sense with any animal. Again a sorting board can be used for protection.

Use of a Dart Gun

When all else has failed, you can use a dart gun. But there are things to remember.

- Not all sedation works with pigs. Teazol is recommended but you must know the weight of the pig and proper dosage. Having a veterinarian on hand is an added plus.
- Never dart any place except in the "ham" area of the leg. To do so can injure the animal if hit in the wrong place. If you don't have experience with a dart gun, find a hunter who is good at it.
- Once you fire the dart gun, freeze and don't move. The pig will run just a few yards and stop to graze or eat. Stand still until you see him lay completely down. Be ready to move in with the crate quickly and quietly. Make sure once in the crate that he can't hurt himself when coming out from under the drug.

Transporting Pigs

PREPARATION FOR TRAVEL IN OR OUT OF STATE

1. You need to know the law(s)

We, at FARAC, put the welfare of the pigs first at all times, and that includes interstate transport. Each state's animal health regulations are different. The destination state must be called and an entry number obtained. Here is where your state veterinarian becomes your best friend, or should be. He/she is your resource for requirements of different states. Here is a link to check on different states and their requirements for importing a pig(s). <http://www.globalvetlink.com>

All pigs should be blood tested for pseudorabies (attachment I) and brucellosis

(attachment II) unless the pig is part of a herd already certified by your state. Your local veterinarian draws the blood and sends it to a state lab where it is checked. A form of identification is then applied to the pig. Can be a

tattoo or ear tag. Most vets like the ear tags as they are easy and quick to put on but not always beautiful to look at. Once the blood test results are back, the veterinarian is called back in to fill out a health certificate on each pig that is traveling. This health certificate must include the ear tag or tattoo number, give the address and contact information on where the pig is going, and she must call that state veterinarian and get an "entry" ID number to go on the health certificate. Also, just because that pig is well the day the blood work was done and the health certificate written, doesn't mean that tomorrow the pig will be disease-free or free from other illnesses.

TRANSPORTING

Whether transporting a short distance or long distance, you must take into consideration the following.

1. Transporter must be large enough to accommodate the pig(s). If in a livestock hauler, they must have room to move around some.
2. It must be well ventilated, taking into account the temperature. Not too hot or too cold. Pigs are similar to humans in thermo-regulation. In other words, if it would not be comfortable for you, it won't be comfortable for the pig. Remember that pigs cannot sweat. Summer heat is particularly deadly.
3. If transporting in a carrier, the pig should be able to stand up and have some room. The carrier should have some sort of mat or bedding to prevent sliding and injury.
4. If hauling a carrier in the back of a pickup truck, the carrier should be closed on three sides with vented sides such as a veri kennel, and you should face it away from the bed where the air will not blow directly into the crate. You should also secure the door with a minimum of two bungi cords or ropes so that if the pig freaks out it can't tear the door off and get loose.
5. If hauling in a cargo-type van, you should have some kind of barrier behind the front seats so that the pig(s) can't get into the driver's area. Short hog panels can be used, with bungi cords to fasten them in place.
6. If in a cargo van with air conditioning, you should still have water available for a long trip. Rubberized cement mixing pans work well both in cargo vans and livestock haulers.
7. Sending one or two misters along is great when traveling in heat. Driver then can mist the pigs down to help keep them cool.
 - A. Another way of keeping them cool is to put down a layer of pine chips and wetting it down and then applying hay on top. Hay will keep the moisture in and help to cool the pigs for hours.
 - B. Traveling at night when it is extremely hot will also be better for the pigs and cause less stress. Most will be lulled to sleep by the movement.
 - C. Make sure the driver has a cell phone so he can call if he runs into a problem in transit.
 - D. Pre-arrange stopovers if traveling long distances where the pigs can be unloaded in a quarantine pen and fed and watered. This allows them to stretch their legs and get some good sleep. Also, a well-rested driver is a safer driver. All well run sanctuaries and rescue organizations will have adequate quarantine pen(s)
8. Above all, make sure to have all the health certificates and paperwork on board. Never leave home without them. This insures the pigs won't be snatched up somewhere and put into quarantine, and it keeps others' pigs

safe and happy.

9. Be sure and take into consideration the climate the pig is coming out of and going to. If shipping from the south into areas which have extreme cold, it is best to transport either in the spring or early fall. This allows for the pig to acclimate to the new colder winters. Extra hot, humid weather can be a death sentence to the traveling pig as well as if it is going into temperatures that dip down into teens or even minus degree weather in the winters. Make sure that where they are going, it is set up for them well in advance of them arriving. If it is an emergency and the pig just has to go during the winter, then be sure it will be kept inside or in a well insulated and partially heated barn or shed. Also make sure the people know to give lots of extra bedding and food during really cold weather. They will need it to sustain themselves until spring. And plenty of water and pools in areas where the summers are hot and harsh.

SEXING THE PIG(S)

What do you call them?

barrow: male piglet neutered before maturity

stag: male pig neutered after maturity

boar: mature, unaltered male

gilt: female that has never had a litter

sow: female that has had a litter

Boars emit a very strong odor and the only thing they think about besides food is breeding. They will mount just about anything or anybody. Such as bales of hay, buckets, logs and your legs. Boars are very protective of their female pig so you should always use caution when dealing with a boar, with or without a female pig. Boars become fertile in just 52 days and can at that time re-breed the mamma sow or other older females. They should be neutered between the ages of 4 to 8 wks old.

Females come into heat every 21 days. They will begin to show signs of their vulva swelling, turning reddish and trying to mount other females. They can become nippy and try to bite you to get you to let them mount you. They will also try to bust out of pens to go looking for a boar. Females usually have their first cycle by the time they are 16 wks of age. Females should be spayed by the time they reach about 4 months or 15 lbs. Which ever comes first.

Most people and this includes animal control officers, that are not familiar with pigs have a hard time sexing them. Below is some tips on telling if they are male or females.

You can tell the sex of pigs much like you would a dog. Female pigs squat and urinates from under the tail and a male urinates from under his belly area. The problem is that most don't have time to stand around and look.

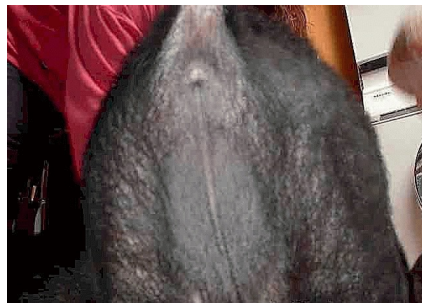
The female pigs vulva is located under the tail as is with a dog. Same with male pigs and dogs. Their penis is in the same area as a dogs but is hard to see if you don't know what you are looking for as they are not as pronounced in pigs as in dogs. The male testicles are located under the tail. Again in small, young pots it is harder to see as they lay close the skin and look like lumps or bumps between the rear legs. As the potbellied pig ages their scrotum sack become more pronounced and more visible. This is unlike the farm hogs testicles that really stand out and are noticable.. One way to instruct on how to tell is to say that the female will have two openings under her tail. Her anus and her vulva. Males will have only one opening and that is his anus. See

Pictures below.

Male farm hog



Male Potbellied pig



Female farm hog



Female Potbellied pig in heat



Pig penis (seldom seen except in boars)



Your shelter should never adopt out an intact male or female. If your shelter veterinarian is unfamiliar with spaying and neutering, videos covering this can be purchased through the Duchess Fund at www.duchessfund.org Or by calling the hot line at 518-747-3494.

KEEPING THAT PIG AT THE SHELTER

Now you have caught and transported the pig to your shelter, how do you keep it and make sure it is healthy?

Things a pig needs -

- Shelter
- Bedding
- Feed
- Water

Shelter and Bedding

We understand that it is not always possible to keep the pig away from the dog area but you should whenever possible. Bare in mind that some of the pigs you take in will be scared of dogs if they have been attacked by them. Keeping them in an area with barking dogs will only cause undue stress for the pig. If you can't keep them away then be sure to make sure the pig cannot see the dogs or the dogs the pig. Block off their area so they will feel more secure.

If you have to keep the pig in a concreted kennel, then put down a rubber mat that can be hosed off and cleaned daily. Also plenty of bedding material such as: hay, straw or blankets. If it is an owner turn in and it has been a house pig, then blankets are the best as it will reduce the stress and make it feel more at home.

If your shelter has an outside area where you can build a holding pen or kennel just for pigs, it is more ideal. Just be sure there is shade and shelter. Large dogloos are great except in areas that get really cold in the winter months. Also be sure that during the warm months to include a wading pool for the pig to cool off in. Remember she has very small sweat glands and doesn't pant like a dog or cat.

Feed and water

Never feed a pig dog food on a regular basis. Short term is ok until you can get regular pig pellets. Dog food can cause health problems to develop later. Use miniature pet pig food whenever possible. If the pig has been raised out of ignorance on dog food and table scraps, it will be hard to get him to eat pig food. Start by mixing some pig pellets into the dog food and begin daily to back off the dog food adding more pig pellets, until he is

eating just the pellets. Also remember that fruit and vegetables are also a good part of their diet. **NEVER FEED CHOCOLATE!** If miniature pet pig food is not available in your area, then invest in Hog Maintenance NON MEDICATED hog food, as this is the most like miniature pet pig food.

Baby pigs up to 4 to 5 months are high energy and need more food than a mature adult. They should be fed 3/4 cup of pellets 3 times a day. From 6 months to adults (remember they mature at 3 yrs of age) should receive 1 cup in the morning and 1 cup in the evening along with vegetables throughout the day. Pigs that are over 5 yrs of age can be cut back to 3/4 cup twice a day as they tend to just lay around.

If you get in a pig that is mal-nourished, you will want to increase the food but do it gradually over the first few days to about 4 to 6 cups per day until you see them beginning to gain weight and look healthy. If they don't seem to be gaining weight, then they should be seen by a knowledgeable veterinarian.

Remember that a healthy pig will be active and enjoy walking and roaming and sometimes running and playing with other pigs. Never over feed a potbellied pig or a farm pig.

Make sure fresh water is available at all times. Check it often as they tend to upset their water and food bowls. If you get in a pig that is depressed and doesn't want to drink, add some apple or cranberry juice to the water. It will entice it to drink more. It is recommended that pigs drink one gallon of water a day per 100 lbs of body weight. Not all pigs will drink this much but it should be available to them at all times.

Also remember that baby piglets from day one can pan feed. You can also bottle feed but you always run the risk of aspiration. When pan feeding you can free feed them. You can use a milk replacer, goat milk or even 2% milk with baby rice cereal added. When using 2% milk, wait three days before adding cereal and then only one tablespoon per cup and then wait three days before increasing and repeat every 3 days until thickened. You can also use baby vitamin added at the same time.



Remember, they are cute when babies - but they grow up

PART II

BASIC HEALTH CARE FOR PIGS

Pigs are typically healthy and hardy but do require vaccinations and worming. They will also require hoof trimming; and for the males- a tusk trim. Usually male tusks are trimmed once a year, beginning around the age of one year.

Vaccinations Schedule for pigs

3 - 4 Weeks. . .Erysipelas, Bordetella, Pasturella

6 - 8 Weeks. . . Mycoplasma, Erysipeias, Bordetella, Pasturella, Actinobacillus, TGE, and 6-way Lepto, and Deworm

9 - 11 Weeks. . .Mycoplasma, Erysipeias, Bordetella, Pasturella, Actinobacillus, TGE, and 6-way Lepto, and Deworm

6 Months*. . .Mycoplasma, Erysipeias, Bordetella, Pasturella, Actinobacillus, TGE, and 6-way Lepto, and Deworm

*Repeated every 6 months thereafter if the pig is shown or kept around other pigs. Some vets recommend yearly for pets kept alone.

When a pig comes into the shelter and you have no history, you should be sure the pig is vaccinated before adoption takes place. Also worming with either Ivomecin or Dectomax. You should worm when they first come in and again in 9 to 14 days depending on the type of wormer used. Most vaccines and wormers can be given intramuscular, either in the neck or rump.

Although pigs are mammals and can carry the rabies virus, it is **very rare** and there are no approved rabies vaccines for pigs.

Normal temperature for a potbellied pig can range from 99.7 F to 101 F. A farm hogs temperature is higher and please don't confuse the two. Average for a farm hog is 101 F. to 103 F. This difference was determined in study done with over 85 pigs in 1999 by Dr Linda K Lord DVM, MS and can be read in its entirety in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, Volume 215, No. 3, dated August 1, 1999.

Medicine in pill form can be hid in peanut butter sandwiches or anything that will disguise the medicine taste. Liquid oral medicine can be administered by a syringe with the needle removed. Place it in the side of the mouth being careful not to aspirate the pig.

FAREC along with NAPPA keeps a list of approved veterinarians by state on their web sites.

<http://www.farec.org/veterinarians.htm>

<http://www.petpigs.com/vets/navetcol.htm>

TIME FOR ADOPTION

Finding just that right home

We all realize that not every person makes a good pet pig owner. We at FAREC believe that pigs do make good pets for the RIGHT people. But just like with dogs and cats, they don't always work out, so making sure the person desiring to adopt has done his homework, knows what he or she is getting into and that they are prepared for the long term commitment, is heading in the right direction.

Remember that pigs are herd animals and do better in pairs. We understand that sometimes when a person is getting a pig for the first time, they want only one. But suggest to them for the welfare of the pig, to adopt another companion pig within six months. That way the pig they are adopting will have a companion pig. Unless of course the ones adopting already have a pet pig and are adopting one as a companion. Also make sure they are adopting to have a pet pig and not to use it as a food source. You might want to add this line to your adoption contract for pigs.

* You realize and understand that this pig is only for a pet and not a food source

Below are some other tips that will help when adopting out a pet pig.

1. Does their local zoning allow for pigs? This is important and they should have it in writing. Never place a pig in an area not zoned for them. If they are not zone for a pet pig, then suggest to them they may want to seek out ways to get their commissioners to consider changing the zoning for the future. Pigs are here to stay and more and more places are now allowing them. But it needs to be done before the fact, not after. You may want to verify the zoning in the areas you service and get periodic updates.
2. Does the potential adopter own or rent his home? If renting, a letter from the landlord will insure the safety of the pig and that it is allowed. This also should be provided in writing and a copy attached to the adoption contract.
3. Does the potential adopter already have a pig or two? If not, here is a chance to educate about them being herd animals and that they should seriously consider adopting another pig either with this one or within six months.
4. Make sure they understand the requirements for outdoor as well as indoor pet pigs. All pigs need outside time to be a pig. FAREC's rule of thumb is that we never adopt to anyone without a fenced in yard or a pen already in place where the pig can spend quality time outside. They should also have shelter in place before adoption. Many pigs get dumped because of an ill prepared owner.
5. Be sure the pig is spayed or neutered before adopting whenever possible or have the adopter agree to have it spayed/neutered within 60 days. Make that part of the contract.
6. Be sure they have found a local vet that is willing to see and treat the pig. This is vital before adoption. Many vets will not see or treat a pig. If they don't have a veterinarian, FAREC will be glad to help them locate one.
7. Also be sure the potential adopter is aware of state laws regarding out of state transporting. Even if they are adopting as a pet for within the state, many do not realize that in order to take the pig

on vacation or camping with them, they must have it tested and/or health certificate traveling with it.

8. Whenever possible, do a home check before adopting out. Ask one of your staff or volunteers to check on the home prior to adopting. Make sure they are set up and prepared to take the pig home.
9. Pigs get along well with most animals, such as; cats, rabbits, guinea pigs and even ferrets. But many problems have risen from keeping a pig and a dog together unattended. Remember that pigs are prey animals and dogs are predators and should never be left together unattended. If the dog turns on the pig, the pig is the loser. Because pigs are herd animals they will bite at the dog and attack him to set the pecking order. **This is instinct** and the potential adopter should understand this before adopting. If the dog runs or moves out the way, all is fine. The other side of that, is if the dog attacks the pig, again the pig loses. (See Dog Bites)
10. Pigs do make good pets for the right people. Making sure they are well versed in pig parenting is a must or you will get the pig back, or worse yet, it will be dumped along a road somewhere. Micro chipping will also help to identify the pig should it be returned to a shelter. You should also have on hand some educational brochures to give to each adopter. We will be glad to furnish them to you. Please feel free to have the adopter contact FAREC if they have any questions concerning the pig or need help.

Some problems that arise with pigs are

- ◆ Aggressiveness acted out by charging and/or biting
- ◆ Bored pigs have been known to tear up flooring and eat through walls. Pigs are highly intelligent animals and get bored very easily with nothing to do while owners are away.
- ◆ Breaking into cupboards and even the refrigerator.
- ◆ Not using a litter box.

All of the above can be corrected, and that is where we come in to work with the owners to stop bad behavior. But remember, if they are educated prior to adopting it should ward off these problems. Remember that no animal, including pigs, should live 24/7 in a house. They need to do pig things and also just to lay in the sun soaking up the vitamin D from the sun rays. It is part of what will help to keep them healthy and happy.

WORKING WITH RESCUES AND SANCTUARIES

It is always best to work with local rescues and sanctuaries. But we all know that some collectors operate this way. So be sure to check out the rescues and sanctuaries that you work with.

Things to look for to find a good rescue or sanctuary to work with.

1. Be sure that the rescue or sanctuary you are working with doesn't allow breeding and doesn't promote breeders. Check out the facilities of any sanctuary. Many are no more than collectors.
2. The rescue or sanctuary should promote spaying and neutering of all the pigs that are adopted out, unless health prevents it. (Such as old age or severe obesity.) They will also have a good education program in place.
3. Not all good rescues and sanctuaries are non-profit nor do they have a 501(c)3 status. Many are private and prefer to keep it that way. Just be sure and check them out. Ask other rescues and sanctuaries if they are familiar with them and their practices.

Many well meaning people have begun taking in pigs and calling themselves a rescue or shelter or sanctuary and they are not always well prepared. We are seeing more and more of them fold. It is your responsibility to know who you are working with and their practices. We have found that the best rescues and sanctuaries have very strict adoption guidelines. Some which do not adopt out are very over crowded and over their limits. More laws are needed to help protect the pet pig and we here at FAREC are beginning to look at this and work on this problem

Be sure that each person adopting a pet pig from your shelter leaves well informed and with contact information where they can obtain help, should the need arise. Make sure they have the proper food for the pig and that they also have a name of a vet willing to see and treat the pet pig. That is your responsibility as a shelter.



Lee County Animal Services working along side rescue volunteers to load and transport six pigs abandoned in N. Fort Myers, Florida in 2001

EUTHANASIA

We all know that sometimes, for health or other reasons, a pig has to be euthanized. Most of us don't like to think about it or talk about it. But it is a reality that must be done, and done as humanely as possible. An experienced veterinarian or euthanasia technician can do this humanely by following these guidelines.

We believe that the fastest, and safest and most humane way is to anesthetize the pig into a deep sleep and then roll him onto his back and insert a very long needle with the euthanasia drug directly into the heart. He will be asleep and will not feel any pain.

Another method is to anesthetize the pig into a deep sleep and insert the needle in the jugular vein in the right side of the neck. (***You may have to search for the vein since it is covered by a muscle.***) By applying a slight vacuum and advancing the needle slowly until blood is obtained, you will know you are in the jugular. Once it is located, you can then administer the euthanasia drug.

Both of the above are humane ways to euthanize a pig. Please do not use carbon monoxide poisoning or electrocution. Please anesthetize the pig before the procedure.

IN CONCLUSION

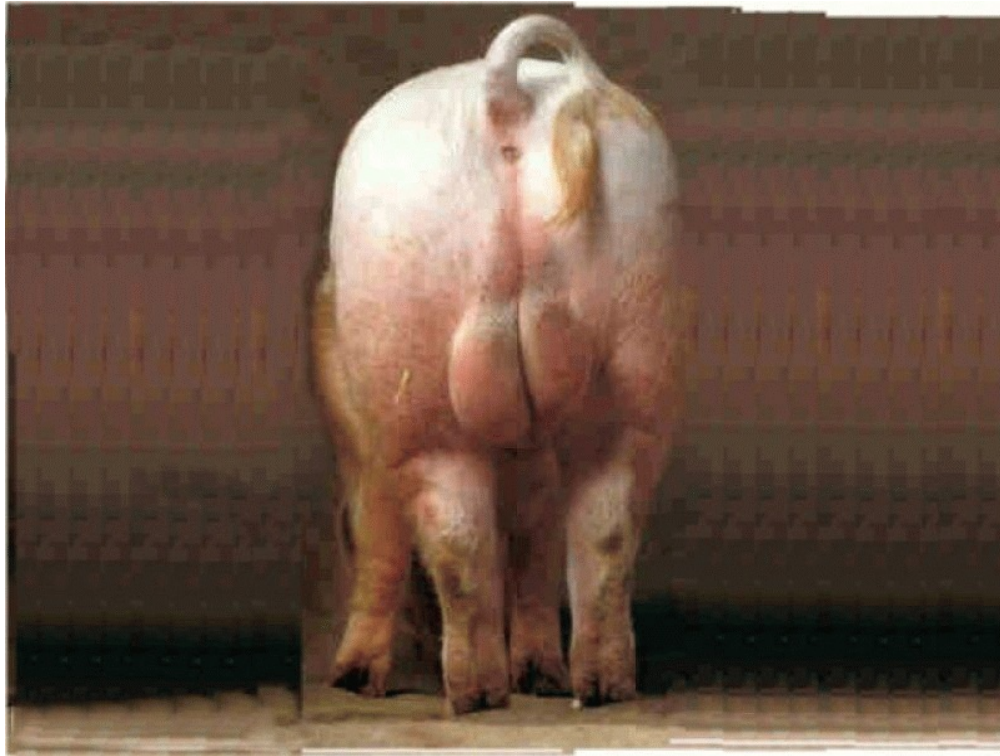
There is no doubt the pet pig is here to stay. But just like dogs and cats, many are now ending up in shelters. Rescues and Sanctuaries all over the US are full and running over. Good approved homes are hard to find. Your shelter can help be a part of the solution. Here is how:

1. Promote mandatory spay/neuter legislation for any animal kept as a pet
2. Promote mandatory licensing legislation for all breeders
3. Include the pet pig under the state pet lemon law. They should not be sold until 8 weeks of age; be spayed/neutered; be licensed; be parasite free.
4. Make sure all your employees, zoning officials and rescue groups in your area are well educated about the myths and misconceptions of pet pigs.

Forgotten Angels Rescue & Education Center Inc., is here for you, to assist in any way we can. We are just a phone call away.

YOU AND YOUR SHELTER CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

***Thank you for joining with FAREC, Inc. in working towards making a difference
in the lives of pet pigs!***



TAIL END

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