



**Breeders of Highest Quality,
Hand Raised & Trained
Pot Bellied Piglets
Miniature Donkeys
Baby Doll Sheep**

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Pot Bellied Pigs

Issues to Consider Before You Adopt a Pet Pig...

A pig as a household pet is really nothing new. I'm always amazed at how many people I meet who had a childhood experience with a runt pig raised in the house. Pigs are very sociable, adaptable, hearty, clean, and intelligent. Their personality and appearance simply beckon many of us to become personally involved. Some pig enthusiasts own elaborate pig paraphernalia collections, while others make a pig or two or three a part of their families and lives. Outlined below is pig-related information that will assist you in making an educated decision about becoming a pig parent.

Behavioral Characteristics

Social: Pigs are social by nature. In their natural habitat they live in a group and a pecking order is established and maintained by body and verbal pig language. If a pig is irritated, she may throw her head in a side swiping motion, or she may scream loudly. (A

contented pig uuffs around making quiet, satisfied noises that are very pleasing.) The important thing to remember is that you need to establish yourself at the top of the social hierarchy in your home or your pig will determine that she is "top pig" and dictate the rules of the roost. There is nothing worse than a pushy pig! Because pigs are social creatures, they may become bored and restless when they are expected to spend inordinate amounts of time alone without either human or other animal interactions. Hence, you need to be creative in providing a pet pig with entertaining distractions. You may even decide to adopt a pair o' pigs to ensure that you never have a bored or lonely pet.

Communicative: Pigs have very advanced communication skills. Examples of vocal communication include the "grunting" a mother pig emits while feeding her young; "barking" that warns of impending danger; and "squealing" in anticipation of eating or indicating displeasure or pain. Some individual sounds are: "Aroo" that means "You aren't getting me what I want fast enough." "Ha ha ha," a quiet, hot panting that indicates acquaintanceship, a sociable "hello." What I call a filth noise (similar to the sound your Uncle Charlie makes when trying to cough something up) means piggy is really P.O.'ed. A happy pig seldom displays body postures, as most are related to maintaining one's station on the social ladder. However, a spoiled, challenged, or unhappy pig may change her ear set, throw her head, face off, or click her jaws in response to an unpleasant situation or another animal invading her territory.

Curious: Pigs are curious by nature. They spend hours rooting in the ground (if given the opportunity) or snurdling about your home with their nose to the carpet or floor seeking out any stray tidbits of food. Their inquisitive nature can be advantageous when it comes time to train, as pigs will maintain a high level of attention when stimulated with new ideas and, of course, the primary motivator...FOOD!

Intelligent: Man rates the pig as the fifth most intelligent animal with man ranking first, followed by monkeys, dolphins, whales and pigs. They function by instinct, intuition and memory. While they have no innate sense of right or wrong and have no conscience, they learn quickly and don't forget what they master. You need to stay one step ahead of your pig or she will train you to do exactly what suits her fancy. Pigs are much like children. They find your weak spot and manipulate until they get their way. If you give a pig an inch, she will most certainly take many miles. However, it is this very intelligence that appeals to many who fancy pigs. You can indeed nurture a very rewarding and interactive relationship with a pig, as a pig will treat you like an equal if given the opportunity. Never underestimate the ability of a pig.

Affectionate: Pigs are affectionate animals. They love companionship and body closeness. Many pig owners actually allow their pig to share the bed and maintain that a porcine sleeping partner is not only warm and cuddly, but doesn't wiggle, squirm, or hog the bed.

Physical Characteristics

Size: The potbellied pig is a very sturdy animal with short legs, a slightly swayed back, a pendulous belly, a short tail ending with a flowing switch, short, erect ears, and a snout that varies from short and stubby to long and elegant. A potbellied pig continues to grow for at least two to three years. Current belief is that the average purebred (not crossbred), healthy, mature, three year old potbellied pig can weigh from 60 to 175 pounds and measure from 13 to 26 inches in height, with the length being proportional to the height. Certainly, there are a few potbellies who will be smaller or larger than this normal range. The weight of a pig is deceiving because they are so hard-bodied. A pig who measures 14" tall by 24" long and weighs 60 lbs. takes up very little space (about half the dimensions of an ottoman) and is a manageable size for a house pet and travel companion. Compare this size pig to a 100 lb. German Shepherd who is taller and longer than a coffee table, with an extension (the tail) that is capable of knocking everything off the coffee table. Granted, pigs are not as agile. A pig may need a ramp to assist in stair climbing.

Senses: The potbellied pig has a keen sense of smell. Reports are that a pig can smell odors that are twenty-five feet under the ground. They are used to unearth such culinary delicacies as truffles for our eating pleasure, as well as sniff out drugs for law enforcement purposes. While a pig has excellent hearing capability, she does not see very well.

Life Expectancy: Potbellied pigs have only been in the United States since 1986 so it is difficult to determine an average life span. Estimates in this regard are between fifteen and thirty years. I would tend to go with the fifteen year prediction. If a pet pig is allowed to exercise regularly, is not overfed, and is examined and vaccinated annually by a veterinarian, she should live to a ripe old age. Both adult size and longevity are directly related to how the pig is cared for. Of course, genetics also plays an important role, but management is of utmost importance.

Pre-Adoption Education

Impulse buying a potbellied pig (or any pet, for that matter) is a bad idea. You need to totally acquaint yourself with the nature of the pig and your responsibilities as a pet pig owner. The fact that you are reading this website means that you are serious about educating yourself about pet pigs. Take the time to familiarize yourself with all aspects of the potbellied pig prior to adoption.

Finding a Reputable Breeder

"You get what you pay for" is definitely true when it comes to buying a potbellied pig. Of course, price is an issue; but you must pay close attention to the health, conformation, and lineage of your prospective pet. You can buy an unregistered, mismanaged, unsocialized, crossbred, unhealthy pig from a bad breeder for very little money; or adopt a happy, healthy, socialized, registered pig from a reputable breeder. A reputable breeder is also a valuable resource if problems arise and for developing contacts with other pig people. You will be way ahead of the game if you choose the latter approach. What you save in vet bills and heartache will be well worth the initial investment in a properly bred and handled piglet.

Best Bet! Adopt a pig from a reputable breeder. Ask your veterinarian to recommend one in your area or call me 573-698-3030 to obtain the names of breeders in your vicinity who are NAPPA Certified Breeders and adhere to the NAPPA Code of Ethics. Ask a friend or acquaintance who owns a potbellied pig, is happy with her pet, and has a good relationship with her breeder for a referral. Locate a breeder and visit their facility. Are the surroundings clean and neat? Does the breeder have a good rapport with her pigs? Are the pigs you see in large enough pens with shelter, shade, and water? Are you allowed to see the parents of the piglet you are considering? You must insist upon seeing the sire and dam because the size and temperament of your prospective piglet's parents are true indicators of what you can expect of your pig-a-rooter. Has the pig you are considering been weaned for at least one week, socialized, neutered, litter-box trained, and learned how to live with human house mates? These are all important issues. What you should see at a good breeding facility, is happy, healthy, tractable breeding stock, a few weaned pigs in the house for pre-adoption training, a clean and healthy environment both inside and outside, and pigs who respond to the breeder eagerly and with obvious affection.

Piggy Comes Home

So, you did all your homework, found a reputable breeder, picked out a healthy, sound pig of your dreams, and everything is copasetic. For the ride home, I definitely recommend that you kennel your piglet. Hopefully, the breeder has desensitized Miss Piggy to the travel carrier or it may be a scary trip. If you take the precaution of putting your pig in the kennel, you won't need to worry about potty accidents or a flying pig who could cause a car crash. A kennel-savvy pig makes a lot of sense for future fun outings or trips to the vet, so you might as well get started on the right foot with crate-training.

You need to locate a veterinarian in your area who has experience with potbellied pigs or is willing to learn. Your breeder should be able to put you in touch with a good one. Don't put this off! Have your new pig examined by a vet within the first week to make sure she is in good health. This will also serve as an introduction of your new family member to your veterinarian. If an emergency should arise and you haven't established a relationship with a D.V.M., you are putting your pig in real danger. Please call me if you are unable to locate a vet, and I will try to assist you.

Owning a Pet Pig

As you can see, I list far more advantages than disadvantages; but, bear in mind that I am a pig person from way back. Owning a pig is similar to being a parent. Patience and love are required and it is not a responsibility to be taken lightly.

Advantages

- Long life span (12-20 years)
- Clean and odor-free
- Non-allergenic in most cases
- No fleas
- Very little shedding
- Quickly trained: litterbox, tricks, harness, etc.
- No barking
- Non-destructive, unlike a puppy
- Low maintenance: annual vet visit, low fed consumption
- Communicative, affectionate, and intelligent

Disadvantages

- You may not be zoned to own a pig.
- You may not have a vet available who knows how to treat potbellied pigs.
- Pigs can become spoiled and manipulative.
- Pigs require a commitment of time and energy from their owners.

Call us at 908-835-0460 for more information. Visitors are always welcome!