

Wondering if the pet pig is the right choice for you? Read on

We hope that you will make an informed choice and hopefully this page will help you make the right choice. First and foremost, don't believe all that breeders tell you about their pigs and their size. It is best to visit a rescue or sanctuary and meet adult pigs up front and personal. It will give you more of an idea on what to expect as they grow into adulthood. Although babies are cute and cuddly and little chunky, they stay that way for a very short time. So know the facts first.



Frequently asked questions about Potbellied Pigs . . . (Hereafter we will refer to the Potbelly pig as “PBP”).

Some facts about PBP's

They do make good pets for the right people. But not all are cut out to be a caregiver to PBP. They are clean, smart, odor-free, no fleas, and inexpensive to feed compared to a lot of other animals. They are herd animals by nature called “sounders” and they bond easily with human companions. They don't bark or chase the mail-person or make a lot of noise to disturb the peace of a neighborhood. When comparing their droppings to dogs and other animals, they are very easy to clean up and leave no odor if don't properly.

They are smart and trainable and learn a lot faster than dogs but remember they are not dogs and do not respond in the same way. Dogs readily try and please their master and are usually very cooperative. But pigs are different in that you must earn their respect and trust. Once that is established, training begins. Given the choice, the pig would rather have you obey him and allow him to be top hog within your family herd.

Pigs are prey animals in the wild and they are naturally cautious animals. They have to be rewarded when they do something right. Then he will continue to do it over and over again. You must learn that pigs cannot be forced to do anything. It is the reward that will win him over quickly and he won't greet you at the door and bring your slippers to you. But he will love laying in the floor with you or on the sofa to cuddle and receive belly rubs.

Living with a pet pig in the home is like living with a 2 or 3 year old for 18 to 20 yrs. They can become bored, grumpy, and even aggressive and destructive if not dealt with and if they are not getting enough attention.

We know that the cost of food is relatively inexpensive, vet care is not. The average veterinary will be lucky to have any experience with PBP's. In their schooling most only get one day or maybe one week of training in the swine department. This makes finding a vet really hard and some areas don't have any that will see and treat a pet pig. Therefore you may have to drive a ways to find one. You should consider this when buying or adopting a PBP.

Do pigs bite?

Does a pig have teeth? Then that pig can bite if given a reason or if the pig is acting out from fear, depression, anger or setting his pecking. All pigs need to be taught how to behave right from the beginning. What is cute as a baby, might turn into a nightmare when he is older. He must always know and be reaffirmed on who is the "top hog" in your home..

Are pigs affectionate?

You bet they are but only in their own way. Unlike a dog who will greet you and jump up to lick you, a pig will drop for a tummy rub in a heartbeat. They enjoy laying with you and being cuddled and scratched on. They will actually seek out a human just for this reason.

What is the expected life-span of a pbp?

With proper care, a potbellied pig can live an average of 17 to 20 yrs old . If you care for him properly and don't let him become over weight and obese and he has ample outside time and exercise, they he should live a long happy life. Also remember vet care is essential to his long life with you.

Can I train my pig to walk on a lead with me?

Yes you can and they have special made halters just for pigs. But realize that he is not a dog and will take his own sweet time on the walk, unless of course you have some none fattening treats to drop along he way. He will check out everything he sees so he will be slow.

What if I get one and then decide I don't want him or have to give him up for some other reason?

PBP bond with their owners and when given up they mostly likely will be come depressed and or angry. So it is best to do your homework and learn all you can before adopting or buying a pbp. Be prepared to keep your pig for its lifetime. Visit a pbp rescue or sanctuary first and learn all you can. We can't stress this enough. We are here for you at FAREC.org anytime you need us or have a problem. We can be reached through email at info@farec.org Or by phone at 931-863-2202. We not only adopt out pigs but we are here to help answer questions and give out facts and to do what is needed to help you keep your pig in your home for it's life.

Have you checked with your local zoning before getting a PBP?

Each city and county has its own zoning codes about pet pigs. Many cities prohibit farm animals, including swine. Many have revised their codes to allow potbellied pig because miniature pigs are considered companion animals. Before getting a pig, check with your city, county and homeowners association to determine the exact code. Get the code in writing no matter what they say it is. See it in writing. Also if you live in an apartment, check it out and get permission in writing before buying or adopting. And what will happen if you move? Will the next apartment allow it? Apartment living is not ideal when having a PBP for a pet. Usually never works out.

How big are potbellied pigs?

PPB's can range between 80 and 175 pounds, with the average pig weighing around 135 pounds at maturity. PBP continue to grow until they reach maturity at 4 to 5 years of age. Comparatively, farm pigs can weigh 600 to 1000 pounds.

Is there such thing as a Teacup or Micro-mini Potbelly Pig?

Touting a PBP as a micro-mini or teacup only makes money for the breeder. Most end up being dumped into sanctuaries and rescues because they grow larger than expected going on what the breeder tells them. Do your homework. There is no such animal as a micro-mini or teacup. Only inbred and under-fed and poor nutrition. Pig ends up stunted and with a very short life-span. Don't buy into their lies. And if you go to see them, they will show you small mammas but what they don't tell you is that the mamma is bred young and usually under 1 yr or 2 yrs of age. Remember they continue to grow until 4 or 5 yrs old. Breeders have a reason to lie and it is money they can make. Sanctuaries don't. It only cost them to keep the pig and usually high vet bills to help the pig survive.

What should I feed my pig?

Pigs need a diet consisting of grain, vegetables and an occasional taste of fruit. Fruit has sugar in it so should not be fed daily. We recommend feeding small pieces 2 or 3 times a week. **Do not** feed your pig dog chow or cat chow. The quantity of feed depends on the age, size and activity level of your pig. Growing pigs and nursing moms need more calories than sedentary older pigs. Nursing moms can be fed 1 cup per baby until they are weaned and then start backing off until you are down to 2 a day. It is recommended that you feed your pig twice daily. Here is what we recommend for pigs. From 6 wks to 5 months we feed 1 cup 3 times a day. They run, jump and play and burn off a lot of calories. From 5 months to 5 yrs we recommend 1 cup 2 times a day and once they are over 5 yrs old we cut to 3/4 cup twice a day. But if you have a really obese pig, then you will want to cut even more and allow yard time for grazing and include low-fat foods such as carrots, cucumbers, celery and leafy green vegetables (collard and mustard greens, spinach, etc.). Your pig needs access to plenty of fresh water. To ensure that your pig is properly hydrated, particularly in the winter months, add lots of hot water to his pig chow. The water will bulk up the pellets, making piggy feel fuller and more satisfied and hydrate at the same time. Pigs are rooters and rummagers by nature, and therefore always act hungry. Occasional special treats are okay, but use caution and also low fat treats such as Cheerio and air popped popcorn.

Can I keep my pig inside?

Lots of pigs enjoy being inside but just like most humans, they require some outside time to root and be a pig and soak up the sun and vitamin D from the sun rays. They also require certain nutrients found in soil so allowing them time to

root around is essential to good health. But also remember that when outside they need shade, shelter and a pool. Since they have no sweat glands to speak of, it is their way of keeping cool so a pool is a must.

Also some pigs really enjoy being outside, so be prepared for yours to make that choice all on his own. Some enjoy being outside during the day and inside at night.

Where do pigs sleep?

In the house they will need blankets or a large dog bed. Some use crates for them which is also a good thing because you never know when you may have to contain them to even transport them to a vet. If they are comfortable in a crate, it will be their safe place.

If outside they can have a dog house or shed but be sure and include some hay for them to snuggle down in. Especially in the winter for heat.

How do I 'piggy proof' my house?

Think of a small child. Remember they are like a 2 or 3 yrs old for their entire life. Make sure that household cleaning products, insecticides, medicines, lighter fluid and other toxins are out of reach. Remove plants that could harm your pig. Take potted indoor plants off the floor and don't leave handbags within reach. Pigs love lipstick and chewing gum! They are very clever with their snouts and particularly industrious when they smell food. Secure your cabinets with childproof locks just as you would for a small child. Avoid feeding your pig out of the refrigerator. If your pig learns to open the fridge door, you might have to install a latch. Tape up computer, telephone and electrical wires where possible. Never allow your pigs access to an open pool. Those easy installed pool fencing is a must when you have a pet pig.

Can a potbellied pig be housebroken?

Yes! A PBP can be housebroken faster than most dogs. Teach them good habits from day one. You can start a piglet with a litter-box, but then quickly teach your pig to do his business outdoors in a designated spot. Young piglets need to urinate every hour or two. Mature pigs can hold it longer. Once they begin to potty

outside they will always go to the door. But remember they won't bark like a dog. They will go stand by the door so you have to be on watch at all times.

Will my pig need a mud wallow?

Pigs don't have sweat glands and the only way they can cool down is in water. Unless he is strictly an outside pig, I would get a child's small wading pool or order a special made piggy pool from PAHeartland.com. They are great and last 5 to 7 yrs. If your pig is outside, a mud wallow is great. Mud also helps their skin and keeps the bugs at bay.

How will my pig do with our dog or cat?

Pigs and cats frequently become fast friends and bed buddies. But dogs are a different story. Never ever leave your dog and pig alone unattended. If you or someone is not going to be there, always keep them separated. A dog can easily kill a pig even if they are good friends. Even if you have a little dog, that dog can get hurt or hurt the pig. Make arrangements from the first to have a separate place when you are not there.

Can I board my pig at a dog kennel?

This is not recommended unless of course it is your only option. Best to find a sanctuary or rescue or better yet, someone to come in and care for them in your home.

Do potbellied pigs come in different colors?

Potbellied pigs come in a variety of colors including black, white, red/brown and pinto. Most potbellied pigs are black with white markings.

Do potbellied pigs shed?

Pigs do not shed the way dogs shed. Most pigs will "blow" their coats once or twice a year. They will lose all their hair in the summer months and it will reappear by winter.

Should a potbellied pig be spayed or neutered?

By all means and just not to prevent unwanted litters. Intact boars smell and give off a musky odor that will stick to everything in your home and yard. Boars become fertile in 54 days and can either breed a female or will start humping everything and be very hard to handle. Also neutering young will slow down the growth of their tusks so they don't have to be trimmed as often.

Females should be neutered by the time they weigh about 15 to 20#. Intact females are hard to housebreak and they will come into heat every 21 days which will last for about 4 days. They have what we call PMS which stands for "piggy mean streak" and become very hard to handle. Also by the time a female reaches about 5 or 6 yrs of age, they will begin to develop some health issues. About 72% of all intact females will begin to have female problems ranging from infections to tumor and cancer. The older and larger your pig gets, the more anaesthesia your pig will require and the more dangerous it becomes. Get your pig neutered and spayed as early as possible!

Do I need to vaccinate or de-worm my pig?

Pigs should be vaccinated yearly, whether they come into contact with other pigs or not. All pigs should be given, at minimum, an annual dose of "Ivermectin", an antiparasitical agent that treats internal as well as external parasites. Some recommend quarterly doses of Ivermectin or other wormer. Yearly vaccinations are highly recommended up to at least the age of five. After the age of five, you can have your vet check the titers to see if they are needed. Most by this time build up an immunity and no longer needs to be vaccinated.

What is the most frequent health problem a PBP has?

It is important that you provide your pigs with a high-fiber diet and plenty of fresh water. Male pigs can also have serious urinary tract problems, which can be costly to repair. Keeping your pig well hydrated can also prevent these and other problems. The biggest health problem is obesity caused by their owners over feeding. Obesity is the number one cause of health complications and death in potbellied pigs. Morbidly obese pigs can become blind from fatty skin folds that obstruct their vision. Obese pigs will inevitably have crippling joint problems and sometimes have respiratory problems, both conditions leading to immobility and death. This is preventable by feeding a proper diet.

Do my pig's hooves and tusks need to be trimmed?

Yes to both and you will either need to be able to do it yourself or have a qualified person such as a vet, do it for you. If you need to locate a vet, we will help. Prepare your pig for vet visits and trims by handling his feet and tusks.

Can I take my pig on vacation?

Yes, some pigs can travel well, but you have to prepare them. They them on short rides in your car and get them use to it. Many hotels and motels are animal friendly but be sure and plan ahead and locate one that will allow your PBP. If you take your pig out of state you will need a health certificate.

Should I get a male or female pig?

Once a male pig has been castrated and a female has been spayed, there is very little difference between the two. It is all a matter of personal preference. Here is where visiting a rescue or sanctuary may come in handy and help you make the right choice.

I've heard that two pigs are better than one. Is that true?

Because pigs are herd animals they really do better in pairs but a single pig can make a fine companion if you have done your homework and know what to expect and know how to deal with their issues. Many times when they reach maturity they can start to exhibit some bad behavior which you will have to be on top of and deal with as it comes up. People with two pigs seldom have these problems. We do however suggest that if you are a first time pig owner that you adopt one and get use to it over 3 to 6 months and then adopt the second pig as a companion. Again you will need to know what happens when you introduce them to each other and they work out their own pecking order. We are more then willing to help you with your adoptions.

Where can I find out more about PBP as pets?

There are many books and web sites with lots of information. We also suggest that you order and keep on hand Potbellied Pig Parenting by Nancy Shepherd. You

might also want to join one of many PBP groups on www.yahogroups.com . Just type it in and watch how many come up. One is Belly-Rubs which is ran by FAREC. We are also always available to answer any questions and help with advice on any problems that you may have.

Is there a small pig like “micro-mini or teacup?”

These are inbred and starved and unhealthy pigs even if you can find one. Check out our site for more information on them at:

<http://farec.org/teacupmicromini.htm>

Now you’ve done your homework and have decided you want a PBP.

Check us out at <http://www.farec.org> and also on www.petfinder.com either in Florida or Tennessee. We work in all states and can help you locate that special pig.

We will be more than willing to help you locate the right PBP for you and your family. Contact us via email to info@farec.org or call 931-863-2202. Good luck with your choice.