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Pot-Bellied Pig Care

At birth, pot-bellied pigs weigh 8-15 ounces and mature into a weight of 60-125 pounds. They are clean, intelligent, and can make high quality pets. They usually have good dispositions and are seldom aggressive towards humans, with the exception of mating boars as they root and squeal. If pigs are kept in a clean environment, odor is not a problem except in unsaturated males who develop a strong scent at 3-5 months of age.

In general, pigs require the same environmental comfort zone as people. The major difference is that they don't sweat or pant to cool themselves. Ideal temperatures for adult pigs are 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit. The major problem is not keeping them warm enough in the winter, but rather keeping them cool enough during the summer months. If housed outside, they need access to sprinklers, pools, and/or fans to maintain their normal temperature. Heat stress is a major problem and can be fatal.

For pet pigs kept in the house, housing requirements are simple. The pig needs a place to sleep, and a place to eat. Pigs are nesting animals and will readily sleep in a dog bed. They are very sloppy drinkers and drinking water should be placed in a heavy bowl and kept in an area where spills are acceptable (i.e. shower stall). Sanitation is accomplished by housebreaking at an early age. Pigs can be litter box trained or trained to go outdoors. Pigs have extremely well developed senses of smell and are incredibly strong. It is important that all food sources within reach of the pig are extremely well secured or they will get to them. This includes refrigerators!

Nutrition:

One of the major problems of miniature pigs is that they love food a little too much. Free-choice feeding always results in extreme obesity. Commercial pig rations are all balanced based on the concept of free choice intake, which means that a miniature pig on restricted feed can suffer protein vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Most commercial diets for commercial pigs will adequately meet the needs of pot-bellied pigs. Young growing pigs should be fed 14% protein and then switched to 12% protein at 4 months of age. Intake must be restricted and an additional source of fiber, such as alfalfa, must be added to supply the necessary bulk. Pot-bellied pigs have a large stomach capacity requiring a diet high in fiber. The commercial diet should be supplemented with alfalfa hay or pellets at a mix of 80% commercial feed to 20% alfalfa.

Obesity and excess protein consumption will lead to the same geriatric problems we now see in dogs and cats such as arthritis, kidney failure, and heart disease. These rations are



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fed to young pigs at the rate of one-half cup per 20-25 pounds and one cup per 60-75 pounds for adult pigs. An adult pig that is getting a cup of feed per day feels like you are starving it to death. This can be remedied by feeding a variety of high fiber vegetables including: grass, hay, raw vegetables, etc.

Major dietary problems can result if too much of the food intake becomes snacks, such as potato chips, bread, etc. The major problem is with mineral levels, which can result in skeletal weakness and fractures. Chewable pet vitamins should be given to prevent vitamin/mineral deficiencies.

Veterinary Care:

Miniature pigs should be given an initial vaccination series to protect them from Atrophic Rhinitis and Erysipelas, as well as dewormed. Annual boosters of vaccines are necessary and annual internal parasite examinations should be performed.

Pig Behavior:

Pigs are highly independent animals. The secret to pig training is to control the source of food. Pigs are highly motivated by food as a reward. Physical discipline does not work. Pigs love to be scratched behind their ears and along the abdomen. One of the most difficult steps in training is being able to pick up the pig because this scares the untrained pig. When you hold a pig, make sure you hold it level with firm support of the chest and rump. Negative rewards should generally be no more violent than spraying with a water bottle as punishment.