



Milwood Animal Clinic

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Miniature Pig Care

Pigs can be remarkable animals, and today, they are being seen more as pets. There are numerous different types of pigs with “miniature” pigs being the most popular as pets. However, even mini pigs grow to be quite large.

Natural History & General facts

Miniature pigs are called as such due to their size. However, they really aren't all that "miniature". They are generally the smaller breeds of that of the pot-belly, Juliana pigs, pennywell breeds. Originally, these smaller breeds were used mainly in research labs due to their easier working size. Following research, miniature pigs began to be sold to zoos and eventually pet homes.



In 1993, the Miniature Potbelly Pig registry was founded to create a "breed" standard. By their definition, a miniature pig was no taller than 24 inches and should weigh under 180 pounds.

This is where a lot of confusion is founded. Pig size! Many people assume that miniature pig should be "tiny" but they're not - at least not compared to a dog or cat. They are smaller than potbelly pigs. Potbelly pigs actually weigh between 100- to 50 pounds, while miniature pigs weigh between 70 to 50 pounds. Teacup pigs DO NOT exist. This is a marketing label used by breeders to advertise standard miniature pigs.

Miniature pigs generally reach adulthood size by 3 to 4 years in age, and both the males and females have tusks. These "tusks" are actually canine teeth. While male tusks are generally more prominent, female tusks will be shorter (as unlike males, they generally stop growing after some time).

The lifespan of a miniature pig is generally 12 to 18 years. They are a long-term commitment as a pet!

Miniature Pigs as Pets

Miniature pigs are incredibly intelligent animals. They do run smaller than their larger breed friends like the Potbelly, and can be house trained. Similar to a cat, litter training is possible, but you CANNOT use cat litter. Due to their natural instinct to root, they can ingest cat litter, so pine pellets are recommended if indoor housing is wanted.

In general, miniature pigs can be very fulfilling pets. They are incredibly social animals and thrive around their own kind and people. However, pigs have a natural order - hierarchy system - when kept in groups. This is something that can be seen with a human owner as well.

Aggression is not uncommon, and is a behavior you will want to address as soon as it is noted. Even young piglets (3-4 weeks of age) can show aggression. Puberty in pigs is not reached until 2-4 months, but they begin to show sexual behaviors prior (such as mounting, difficulties to house train, destructive behaviors). Training a pig is similar to that of a dog/cat. Positive reinforcement is more likely to get good results while punishment can create more problems.

Neutering male and female pigs is recommended for pet homes. Reproductive hormones can lead to unwanted sexual behaviors and aggression in unneutered pigs. Neutering also reduces the risk of many reproductive related diseases.

Miniature pig size, as stated before, is still 70-150lbs, and it is impossible to know what size they will be as they grow. Thus, it is best to be prepared for anything in that range. However, pig obesity is a common occurrence and concern (see nutrition/diet section for more information).

Housing & Enrichment

While it may be tempting to keep a pig entirely indoors, they are not suited for that life. Pigs are naturally curious and grazers. They can be incredibly destructive if left alone, and they will eat anything that they can possibly get their mouths on. This includes trash and non-digestible items. Foreign bodies/obstructions are a common ailment seen in veterinary practice. Child locks may be necessary with a pig as a pet.



An indoor area for a pig can still be set up for supervised play. You will want some place warm for them to nest - blankets and similar items. If you have carpet, you will want to be especially careful. Rooting - digging with their noses - is a natural pig behavior, and they will tear up carpet in doing so. A rooting box must be provided (box with substrate they can't eat, such as large plastic balls, with items hidden within that can satisfy the pig's curiosity).

Hoof overgrowth is also common with strictly indoor pigs. Hooves generally need to be trimmed once a year in pigs that spend time outdoors but, for those kept indoors, this may need to be done every few months to ensure healthy hooves. An abnormal hoof can be painful to walk on, and infections within hooves can occur if not properly cared for.

An outdoor pen is recommended more for a pig. A pen size should be, at minimum, 2.5 yards by 4.5 yards per pig. Fencing is strongly recommended and mesh should be placed beneath the fence to prevent burrowing. Pigs have been known to "break out", and they are actually very good runners (especially when younger) and jumpers. The pen should have a pig house (similar to a dog house) that can protect them from the elements. This should also have nesting materials, such as blankets or straw. The nesting material should be replaced when it becomes soiled or wet. There should also be shelter from the sun to prevent sunburn and overheating from the sun.

Temperature is an important consideration for a pig. They are incredibly prone to overheating (this is why pigs love mud). The ideal temperature range should be 60 to 75 degrees F. They cannot tolerate temperatures above 85 degrees F.

Water should always be available for drinking. Sometimes they may not drink as much as they should (especially during the winter), so using warm water may help to encourage drinking (as can adding a tablespoon of cranberry juice to the water - however, this should not be done consistently)

Water should also be available for soaking. A kiddie pool works well for this.

Due to their highly social nature, enrichment is incredibly important. Single pigs can become depressed and destructive if not mentally stimulated. They do not play with toys in the same manner as dogs and cats. Grazing is an important natural instinct and should be encouraged. Hide food within hay, use feeder puzzles or a rooting box.



Nutrition & Diet

There are many formulated pig diets on the market. Commercial swine feed for production pigs is NOT recommended because they are made for rapid growth and may have antibiotics in them. We recommend the following formulated pig feed brands: Purina, Mazuri, and Ross Mill Farms. These can be found at feed stores generally. The amount to feed will depend on age.

Young piglets generally eat 1/2 cup per 15-20 pounds body weight per day, while adults will eat 1 cup per 50-80 pounds per day. A piglet is still a piglet up to 2 years of age, but the amount of food may need to be adjusted based on your pigs growth.

NEVER feed ad libitum (as much as they want).

Obesity is a very common issue in pigs. If offered food, they will eat it. To help satiate them, hay can be used to stimulate grazing (grass hay), but again, be cautious with how much is being fed (don't feed multiple slabs per day - use small slabs/handfuls per day). They should not be offered unlimited food as they will eat it all and will beg for more!

It is important to remember that pigs are grazers and rooters. They will absolutely knock their food bowls and water bowls over. As such, the bowls should be secured in some way while making certain they are low enough for them to still access.

What to expect at a veterinary visit?

Finding a pig veterinarian can be difficult so it is important to locate your veterinarian BEFORE purchasing a pig. Not every dog or cat vet will be comfortable seeing pigs, and some exotic vets may also not see them. Their requirements for vaccines and procedures can be limiting for small animal veterinarians. It is important to know what your vet may or may not be able to offer in terms of services.

In general, vets may require fasting 6-12 hours prior to examination (excluding piglets) as sometimes sedation is required for all or part of the examination. Pigs can become easily stressed during handling and become quite vocal. It may be an animal's best interest to be sedated.

Vaccination series can vary based on geographic location, but common vaccines include Erysipelas, Tetanus Rabies, and Leptospirosis. Talk to your veterinarian about which vaccines are recommended for your pig in your area. Your vet may or may not carry all of these vaccines and you may have to purchase them from a feed store and have the veterinarian administer them.

Vaccine series generally begin at 8 to 12 weeks and have boosters every 2 to 3 weeks until series is completed. Annual vaccinations are then performed.

Regular fecal examinations to test for intestinal parasites are important and are done yearly. Parasites are common in pigs as they spend a lot of time outdoors and root around in the soil and grass, where parasites tend to reside. Resistance to anti-parasitic is a known issue, and thus, this is why fecals are checked prior to administering any medication.

Pigs have teeth! As such, pigs need dental care, too! Tusk trims can be routine and are important to prevent oral trauma. Vets generally do not remove the tusks unless it is for a medical reason.



As previously stated, healthy pigs may only need a hoof trim once a year, but it is important for a vet to examine the feet. Abnormal hooves can lead to a multitude of problems. They can lead to gait abnormalities, earlier onset of arthritis, and infections in hooves can lead to profound bone issues.

Altering of pigs: Neutering (removal of testicles) a pig is generally done at 8-12 weeks of age while spaying (removal of uterus and ovaries) is done between 3-6 months of age

Important medical conditions commonly seen

Number one issue: Obesity. Obesity. Obesity! Since they LOVE food, they can easily become overweight. This can lead to further issues such eye issues, joint problems, and heart problems. Not feeding pigs ad libitum (as much as they want) is the best possible prevention to this.

Infectious diseases we can see include - Erysipelas (prevention through vaccination). This can lead to lameness due to the bacteria causing inflammation/pain of the joints. This can also lead to skin issues (crusting and pain). In severe cases, it can be deadly. Respiratory infections can also be seen - sneezing, coughing, and nasal discharge are common presentations. Pigs have a normal red/brown ocular discharge; however severe respiratory infections can destroy the internal structures of a pig's nose, so it is best to bring your pig in if there is a concern.

Ear issues. Normally, mini pigs produce dark brown, excessive ear discharge. This is normal. However, they can get ear infections, and this can progress to inner ear infections. Do NOT treat suspected ear issues at home.

Parasites - skin and internal. Pigs can get lice (which you cannot get as a human), but they can also get mange (which can be contagious to other pets in the household). Intestinal parasites can be checked for with a fecal examination, and treated as needed.

Other conditions include sunburn, eating things they shouldn't - leading to obstructions, bladder issues, and uterine issues to name a few. Yearly examinations with your veterinarian are important, and if anything unusual is seen, it is probably best to give them a call.

Miniature Pig Review

- Miniature pigs weight between 70-150 pounds

- There is NO such thing as a teacup pig
- Pigs are incredibly social animals and can make good pets under the right circumstances
- Pigs should be kept primarily outdoors in pens
- Do NOT feed ad libitum. Feed a commercial pig diet (not production food!)
- Social enrichment is important - have grazing and rooting boxes for them to play with
- Obesity is one of the most common issues we see with pigs!
- Spaying and neutering is recommended.

