



Info credited to NAPPA (<https://petpigs.com>)

CHOOSING A VETERINARIAN

Looking for a good local vet? Check out our Pig Vets page.

Choosing a veterinarian to treat your potbellied pig is critical to the care and well being of your pet pig. Selecting a vet is similar to and as important as choosing your child's pediatrician. This choice should be made in advance of any medical emergency that might arise. Should your pig become ill or in a crisis situation it is imperative that a relationship already be established with your local veterinarian. To aid you in identifying a potbellied pig veterinarian in your area, NAPPA provides an online list of vets, both in the United States and internationally, who are identified as treating the pet pig.

It should be noted that your veterinarian is your best resource, if you are in doubt about the physical well being of your pet pig. Being prepared for minor medical emergencies is also important in the care of your pet pig.

PRE OFFICE VISIT TRAINING

- Make certain your pig can be lifted and held easily.
- Train your pet pig to a kennel so the ride in the car will be a safe one.
- Touch your pig all over - inside her ears, her hooves, under her tail and stomach as your vet might during a physical examination. Make sure your pig is used to being rubbed/scratched vigorously on the neck and behind the ear since this is an action the vet might do while giving an injection.

SELECTING YOUR VET

- Ask your breeder for a qualified vet recommendation.
- Ask your current vet for a recommendation, should she not treat potbellied pigs.
- Ask your local pig club or other pet pig owners for a recommendation.
- Select a vet located close to your home.
- Select a vet trained or at least interested in learning about the care of the potbellied pig.
- Interview your prospective vet to determine his experience with the potbellied pig and his interest in learning more about your pig's care.
- Obtain references, if possible, and talk to them about their experience with the prospective vet.
- Visit your prospective vet with your pet pig prior to any emergency situation.
- Have your prospective vet do a "well" checkup for your pig.
- Evaluate your prospective vet as to the manner in which she relates to and handles your pet pig.

AT THE VET OFFICE

- Be prepared to carry your pig into the examination room should your pig not be able to walk comfortably on your vet's slick floors.
- Correctly lift your young pig by placing one arm just forward of the front legs and the other around the rump.
- Use a crowding board to push your older pig into a corner allowing the vet to administer a shot.
- Correctly restrain your older pig for more involved medical procedures by standing behind your pig, placing your arms around her stomach and pulling your pig to your chest so that she is sitting directly on her tail with her head and backbone on your chest and her feet directly in front of her.
- Do not allow anyone to lift your pig up by her stomach or by her legs.
- Do not use a commercial swine nose snare on your pig.
- Take a rubber mat or rug for your pig to stand on, thus providing better footing on the exam table or floor.
- Be present in the exam room, if possible.
- Talk calmly to your pig during the medical procedures so that your pig will feel safer.
- Take treats and have your vet offer a few as a friendly introduction.
- Follow your vet's instruction should the stress to you or your pig become too great during the exam.
- Take bedding should your pig need to stay overnight.
- Check the temperature of the location in which she will be housed, providing a heat lamp or a fan if necessary.
- Travel with extra bedding and a plastic bag should your pig have an accident in the car.
- Reward your pig with a very special treat after the visit to her vet.

DO'S AND DON'TS AT THE VET OFFICE

DON'T:

- Assume your male or female pet pig will make the best pet if it remains unneutered or unsplayed.
- Assume your pet pig's breeder has provided the necessary medical attention.
- Assume your pet pig needs no vaccinations, just because she lives in the city. -
- Assume your pet pig can wait until the last minute to establish a relationship with a qualified potbellied pig veterinarian.
- Assume your pet pig will get well without proper medical attention and advice.

DO:

- Ensure you have the means to transport your pet pig including a crate and/or harness.
- Provide your pet pig with a qualified vet to do your spay or neuter.
- Provide your pet pig's veterinarian a complete health care record given to you by your breeder.
- Provide your pig with a vaccination and - worming schedule, approved by your veterinarian.
- Provide your pet pig a qualified veterinarian before a medical need arises.
- Provide your pet pig - the necessary immediate health care and information, whether obtained from your veterinarian or breeder.

FIRST AID KIT

Note: It is recommended that you check with your local veterinarian about the medical needs and requirements of the pet pig in your community.

- Rectal thermometer
- Pepto-Bismol
- Ipecac or peroxide
- Topical hydrocortisone
- Antibiotic cream
- Insect repellent
- Mineral oil
- Kaopectate
- Bandages

NAPPA'S MINIMAL VACCINATION SCHEDULE

Locating a qualified veterinarian with potbellied pig clients can be achieved by contacting your breeder, another potbellied pig owner, your local pig club, your current vet, or researching through the Internet.

Piglet - 6 Weeks of Age:

- Erysipelas/Rhinitis,
- Leptospirosis (Leptospirosis vaccination is dependent upon geographical region)

8-9 Weeks of Age:

- Erysipelas/Rhinitis Booster
- Leptospirosis Booster

Worming

9 Weeks to Adult:

- Biannual Erysipelas/Rhinitis Booster
- Leptospirosis Booster
- Worming

WHEN TO CALL A VETERINARIAN

- Persistent vomiting for more than 24 hours (especially if yellow)
- Off feed for more than 24 hours
- A temperature of more than 102 degrees
- Diarrhea for more than 24 hours
- Constipation for more than 48 hours
- Lying down for more than 8 hours
- Unwillingness to rise
- Painful abdomen
- Persistent bleeding
- Blood in stool
- Seen eating something potentially poisonous or obstructive
- Sudden behavioral changes
- Rapid breathing
- Persistent lameness

ABOUT ANESTHESIA

There are several ways to anesthetize including inhalation of gases, injections, and even intra-nasal drugs. Inhalation anesthesia (isoflurane specifically) is the safest means to anesthetize a pig, if available. Halothane is not recommended as it has been linked to PSS (Porcine Stress Syndrome) in commercial pigs. Some vets might still use halothane but most have at least one isoflurane machine. The injectable dissociative drugs are common and effective but recovery can be rough and delayed. Should dissociative anesthesia be the only choice it is imperative that you be available to either crate or hold your pig until the pig is fully recovered. By doing this, you will lessen the stress and fear and possible injury to your pet. There are many other injectable drugs that can be used that are safer and provide a smoother, quicker recovery than the dissociative drugs. The drawback to these drugs is that they are very expensive. One example is a combination of midazolam, medetomidine, and butorphanol.

In summary, there are three choices when anesthetizing your pet pig:

BEST: Isoflurane gas

BETTER: Consider a safe injectable drug protocol (like the one mentioned above) that might be more expensive. **GOOD:** The dissociative drugs.

CONCLUSION: A well-trained and prepared pig will be much more likely to cooperate with any procedures that your vet deems necessary. The training time prior to the visit to the vet is time well spent so that your pet pig will experience as little stress and pain as possible.