

This Little Piggy Stays Home

Potbellied pigs can be the perfect pets-but only for the perfect owners.

Hi to all you pig enthusiasts! I cannot tell you how or why, but I often had opportunities to submit articles to various medias. I hope you enjoy this one.

I love the photo. I call it "Three Pigs in a Pan". This is a rubber feeder for larger critters. But this trio of baby pigs found it perfect for a cozy cuddle.

Until next time, and remember Kindness is Magic! ~ Nancy



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"Three Pigs in a Pan"

How would you like an animal companion that is intelligent, affectionate, curious, playful, clean, generally quiet, odor-free, usually non-allergenic, quite trainable and extremely sociable? Sounds like an ideal pet in any home. Now what if I tell you that describes the potbellied pig?

Still interested?

Potbellied pigs, a breed of domesticated pig that originated in Vietnam, are smaller than common American or European pigs. They typically weigh between 20 and 300 pounds, prompting descriptions like "micro" and "mini." (American and European pigs, by comparison, can weigh as much as 1,000 pounds.)

The potbellied pig craze of the 1990s resulted in many abandoned and unwanted pigs. Impulse buying and pigs growing much larger than anticipated are frequent causes of abandonment.

Darlynn Czerner of Darlynn's Darlins Inc., a non-profit, no-kill, animal rescue and sanctuary that specializes in pig rescue, describes pigs as "awesome companion animals *for the right people*. For those people, it is important to know that a pig will change their lives in ways they cannot imagine. For the others, the pig will suffer the brunt of the ignorance." Czerner says that many of the pigs they rescue cannot be adopted by new owners due to a lack of proper training when they were cute little piglets.

Pigs are unrelenting in their quest for food. They can learn to open the fridge, cupboards or wherever they smell food. It's common for pigs to even become demanding, begging for food and even getting aggressive. Pigs also "root," or explore with their snouts inside and outside. This is instinctual, so they need to be trained to know where they can root and be given a place to do that.

Pig O' My Heart Potbellies owner, Nancy Shepherd, raised potbellied pigs for many years, and she offers sound advice and information to determine if a pet pig is right for you and your family. Like Czerner, Shepherd believes that impulsively buying a potbellied pig, more often than not, is a bad idea. Instead, she offers some things to consider when contemplating getting a pig as a pet:

{1} Do you own your home or are you buying one?

{2} Do you live in an area zoned to have a pet pig? Pigs are illegal in many places. To find out how your neighborhood is zoned, contact your local zoning commission or animal control.

{3} Are you able to secure your yard with a fence?

{4} Do you have access to a vet who is familiar with treating pet pigs?

{5} Do you have someone who can take care of your pig when you are out of town or on vacation? Regular pet boarding facilities may not be equipped to board pigs.

{6} Can you commit? Taking care of a pig is a significant commitment; pigs often live for 13-18 years, and require daily care and attention.

There are advantages to owning a pig as a pet, according to Shepherd, but it is important to thoroughly research and contemplate pig ownership before making a final decision. Ask your veterinarian about pet pigs or go online to talk to other pet pig owners. "A pet pig should be neutered before adopting," Shepherd says. "Intact pigs do not make good pets." Always adopt from a reputable breeder or rescue that provides a health guarantee and support information, including care, feeding, housing, training and veterinary needs.

For more information or to consider helping pigs at rescues, contact Nancy Shepherd at nlshepherd@bessi.net.

By Gina Stancel, editor of Bella Magazine July 2014. Gina Stancel is an avid animal lover who focuses her freelance photography and writing on animals and animal-related causes.