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How To Care For A Potbellied Pig

By Gray Rollins

Although for many people the word pig conjures up images of a farmyard, potbellied pigs are increasingly popular as domestic pets. They are much smaller than the standard farm pig, and commonly seen with mixed black and white coloring; or all black, all white, or silver coloring. Adults typically weigh around 125–200 lbs, are fully-grown at 2–3 years and are about the height of a medium sized dog. They have a projected lifespan of 15–20 years, and are relatively low maintenance pets, requiring roughly the same amount of daily care as a dog. Potbellied pigs are popular city pets, and their small size lends itself well to apartment living.

The potbellied pig originated in Vietnam, and is a combination of several breeds. Given the chance, they can interbreed with common farm pigs and wild boars, as they are all part of the genus *sus scrofa*. Potbellied pigs are exotic pets, which can make them a bit more troublesome than a cat or a dog for this reason: not all veterinarians treat them which can make it difficult to get these pets the care they require. Pigs need their tusks trimmed every couple of years, and may need their hooves trimmed annually. A veterinarian, or an owner who has learned how from a doctor, can perform these tasks. Pigs will need to be spayed or neutered and require regular vaccinations.

Potbellied pigs make enjoyable pets because they are very intelligent and affectionate. However, like many animals they are prone to laziness and aggression if not properly exercised and socialized. At times, an adult pig may rebel against the owner in so-called "dominance aggression", and will need to be reprimanded gently yet strongly, and taught to respect the owner's authority. They can be well trained, if properly motivated by food and other rewards. They take well to positive reinforcement when they are behaving well, but should not be physically punished.

Pigs should have daily leash-led walks or they will gain weight. They will eat nearly endless amounts of food, particularly high-carbohydrate unhealthy food, if allowed, so it is vital to restrict your pet's access to the food it craves. They are relentless in searching for food, and should be kept far away from the kitchen or any food storage. Special pig feed can be purchased in a pet store or special-ordered. Pigs are omnivores, equally interested in vegetables, meats, sweets, and carbohydrate-based foods.

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Pigs are social herd creatures, and it is often recommended that they be kept in pairs or groups, especially if they are kept outside the house. This keeps them stimulated and active. Because of their intelligence, if pigs get bored they may become destructive and troublesome. Inadequate attention or playtime can compel pigs to do anything from rooting up plants to taking up linoleum floors and eating drywall. Pigs need to be kept in their own confined area of the house, preferably an entire room, if not a confined outdoor area. They are clean and essentially odor-free, so it is not usually difficult to find a room where they can roam.

Like any pet, a potbellied pig is a serious commitment, and requires some specialized care that demands time and resources. Shelters are overflowing with abandoned pigs whose owners did not anticipate the kind of attention that their pet would need. However, the intelligence, affection and personality of a well trained, adequately cared for potbellied pig can be very rewarding for the prepared, responsible owner.

Gray Rollins is a featured writer for PotbelliedHogs. To learn more about potbellied pigs, visit us at

<http://www.potbelliedhogs.com/>

and

<http://www.potbelliedhogs.com/careofpotbelliedpigs/>

Tiger and the Three Pigs

By David Leonhardt a.k.a. The Happy Guy

After years of terrorizing the countryside, hunting deer, poaching livestock, killing game, Tiger grew long in the tooth. Finally, he knew it was time to retire. So he packed his bag and ambled into town to the Three Little Pigs Retirement Home Inc. He rang the bell, and the first little pig appeared on the landing above. "What do you want?" asked the little pig.

"I come here to retire," Tiger replied.

"Ooooh. I don't think so," the little pig declared. "You're not like us. You've got big teeth. Very dangerous. We can't let you in."

So Tiger went to the dentist and had his teeth removed. The next day, he returned to the Three Little Pigs Retirement Home Inc. "What do you want?" asked the second little pig.

"I have no more teeth. I come here to retire," Tiger replied once more.

"Ooooh. No, no, no. That just won't do," the little pig exclaimed. "You're different. You have sharp claws. You scare us. We can't let you in."

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So Tiger went to the manicurist and had his claws removed. The next day, he returned to the Three Little Pigs Retirement Home Inc. "What do you want?" demanded the third little pig.

"I have no more claws. I come here to retire," Tiger repeated.

"Ooooh. Let me see," the little pig muttered as he disappeared from sight. Tiger heard much whispering and commotion behind the big wooden doors. "Okay, come in," said the little pig.

Tiger strolled through the doors, and there stood the three little pigs, grinning ear to ear. Suddenly they jumped on Tiger. Squealing with delight, they beat him up and sent him packing. No teeth. No claws. Yippee! Finally they got even with Tiger for terrorizing the animals.

Tiger should have known better. He should have accepted who he is and not try to conform to someone else's image of him. What tiger in his right mind lets a pig paint his portrait?

So, who paints your portrait?

David Leonhardt is The Happy Guy, and author of

Climb your Stairway to Heaven: the 9 habits of

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