



ANIMAL ANTICS

Note for Pet Owners:

Pet Patrol 365 provides this information for educational purposes only. You should seek the advice of your veterinarian if your pet is ill, as only they can correctly advise on the diagnosis and the recommended treatment for your pet.

An Introduction to Pig Keeping



Pigs Can Make Great Pets!

Pigs are generally not viewed as your typical choice of pet! And, as cute and novel a pet piglet may be, they have a life expectancy of up to 20 years and an adult size **FAR** outweighs any breed of dog. Don't let this put you off though as pigs can make absolutely lovely pets, if you know what you're taking on. As with any new pet, it's important to do your research to make sure that it's the right type of animal for you and your family. With a reported intelligence similar to that of a 3 year old toddler, a pig can be a very interesting, rewarding and delightful pet to own. This natural intelligence, together with their curious nature and ever-present desire for food, does mean that you have a pet that can be tamed and trained.

Pig Ownership

Owning and caring for a pig requires a great deal of commitment, time, skill, money, sufficient land on which to house the animal, specialist veterinary care when necessary, and compliance with the legislation governing keeping a pet pig.

Being highly inquisitive, pigs will spend a large part of the day exploring their environment, rooting and foraging at the earth, causing the land on which they are kept to be greatly disturbed with all visible signs of vegetation quickly disappearing. Pigs must be exercised regularly to avoid obesity, constipation and to prevent their feet from becoming overgrown (straw, hard plastic balls and tyres can be placed in a pig pen for your pig to play with to encourage exercise and prevent boredom).

Pigs are very strong animals and the area in which they are housed must have strong but safe fencing surrounding it to prevent them from escaping. It's important to ensure that pigs are not exposed to draughts, sudden temperature changes and prolonged exposure to sunlight. Pigs are very poor thermo-regulators, meaning they have great difficulty keeping cool in summer and warm in winter. It's very important to ensure that in warm weather pigs are provided with a wallow (with clean water) and adequate cover to shelter from the sun (pigs are prone to sunburn and sun stroke). In cooler weather and at night, pigs must always have access to warm, dry, draught-free, straw bedded accommodation, as they are very susceptible to the cold.

Pig Rules & Regulations

In the UK, you can't just go out, buy a pig and bring a pig home - there are strict laws and regulations that need to be followed before you can have a pig, whether it's as a pet or otherwise. The paperwork and legal requirements associated with keeping livestock can seem quite overwhelming at first, even if you're only planning on having a couple of pigs as pets. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA is your first port of call. They have a great deal of useful and necessary information to support any prospective pig keeper.

Choosing Your Pig Breed

Some of the larger breeds of pig do have a reputation for their even temperament e.g. Gloucestershire Old Spots but most pet pig keepers will probably be thinking of a smaller type of pig e.g. Vietnamese Pot Bellied Pig, Kune Kune Pig or a Micro Pig (especially if you are going to let it roam the house!). A visit to some of the UK's many country shows will enable you to see at first hand some of these breeds and have a chat with prospective breeders.

If you are thinking of one of the smaller breeds, you will also need to investigate feed suppliers as most small pet pigs require quite a specific low protein diet (at least during the winter when grazing is more restricted). This type of diet will not routinely be available in your local pet shop and you may need to access this via a farm store or internet shopping.

There are many pig keeping courses widely available within the UK through independent providers and agricultural colleges which cover all aspects of pig husbandry including the topics discussed above. Plenty of research should find a course suitable to your requirements.

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