



## AMPA RESCUE ADVOCATES SHELTER GUIDE

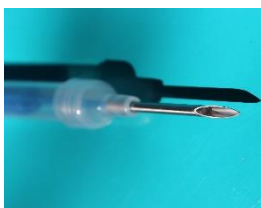
This informational guide is brought to you by the American Mini Pig Association in order to educate and assist shelters and animal control agencies in identifying and caring for pet mini pigs until they are placed for adoption. Pigs are highly intelligent animals and make wonderful pets in the right environment. A pig's behavior and communication is quite different from dogs or cats. Pigs are typically frightened and confused in a shelter environment. A little patience and understanding of their behavior will help prepare them for an adoptive family.



## INTAKE PROCEDURES

Upon intake, all pigs should be scanned for a microchip. The AMPA Standard Microchip Placement is the soft spot behind the left ear. However, when scanning for a microchip, shelter personnel should scan behind both ears, along the length of the neck, across both shoulders, and lastly search areas where the chip may have migrated. If a microchip is not found at time of intake, one should be inserted for future tracking. Please see attached AMPA Standard Microchip Placement Guide for more information.

Pigs are carriers of internal and external parasites. The most common external parasites is mange mites (scabies). Swine lice are also found on occasion. The most common internal parasite is roundworms. These parasites are effectively treated with ivermectin. Brand name Ivomec 1% injectable formula for swine is available through veterinarians, local feed stores, or Amazon. This may be given via injection per the box directions. According to Cathy Zolicani, DVM, this injectable ivermectin is preferably given orally at the dose of 0.2 ml per 10 lbs body weight. This bitter liquid mixes well with yogurt or other snack food. Repeat this dose in 10-14 days to completely eradicate external parasites.



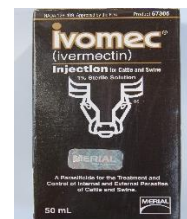
**Microchip Syringe**



**Microchip Placement**



**Mange Mites**



**Ivomec (ivermectin)**



**Safe-Guard**

## FERAL VS PET

It is important to differentiate feral and pet pigs when stray pigs are spotted or brought in. Pet pigs come in a variety of body shapes, sizes, and colors. There are many breeds of pigs kept as pets. For simplicity sake, it is easier to identify a pig as a feral, or rule that out. Wild or feral pigs reach an average of 150 to 300 pounds. Adults are 2.5 to 3 feet tall at the shoulder and 5 to 6 feet in length from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail. Their head is large with a very sharp angle from the forehead straight into the snout. They have a barrel shaped body with a straight back. The head and shoulders are proportionally larger narrowing to a smaller waist. The ears of a wild or feral pig are larger and hairier than pet pigs. Wild or feral pigs have proportionally longer legs than mini pigs. Wild and feral pigs are born brown with tan stripes. As they mature they become a rich chocolate, dark brown, or black color with a thick coarse coat. These pigs may be other colors as they interbreed with domestic pigs.



**Typical Feral Facial Features**



**Angle Into Snout**



**Barrel Shaped Body of Feral Pigs**

On the other hand, mini pigs come in all varieties of colors and some patterns. White, black, brown, gray, orange, cream, solid, striped, or spotted are common. They typically mature between 50-150 pounds at 14-20 inches tall. Some breeds have short squashed snouts while others have elongated snouts. Some breeds have a curved sway back and rotund abdomen while others have a more slender build with a straight back. Mini pigs have straight tails. Males and female mini pigs grow tusks. Only males grow long enough to stick out of the mouth excessively.



**Mini Pig Facial Features**



**Mini Pig Body Shape**



**Mini Pig Body Shape**



**Mini Pig Facial Features**

## HOUSING

Pigs do well housed indoors or outdoors when given proper accommodations. Indoors in heated/cooled units pigs do not need any special attention to temperature. Concrete floors are not comfortable for pigs. They need somewhere soft to lay down. Straw, hay, or blankets will provide comfort and nesting materials for the pig to reduce stress. Outdoors care must be taken to keep pigs in acceptable temperature ranges. Protection from sun, wind, rain, and snow are essential. A draft free barn or dog house that is protected from flooding is a good solution for a mini pig. Bedding is needed for comfort and to reduce stress, either hay, straw, or blankets. Pigs do not have functioning sweat glands. Instead, they rely on mud holes or plastic kiddie pools to cool off during the summer. Care must be taken to provide clean fresh water at all times to pigs for cooling off and staying hydrated.



**Indoor Kennel**



**Indoor Stall**



**Pool For Cooling Off**



**Outdoor Barn Stall**

## FOOD & WATER

The most important nutritional requirement for mini pigs is water. Pigs should have fresh water available at all times. Deprivation of water creates a deadly imbalance of sodium in the pig. Never let a pig go more than a day without access to water. If water deprivation is suspected, rehydrate the pig slowly offering  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water every 15 minutes until the pig is hydrated.

Mini pigs require a specially formulated food. Dog and cat foods are very unhealthy and sometimes dangerous to the mini pig. Commercial hog food is not nutritionally balanced for the mini pig. Farm stores and Tractor Supply carry foods labeled for mini pigs. Mazuri, Manna Pro, and Nutrena are name brands. Pigs should be fed a small amount of pelleted food twice a day plus vegetables mid-day. Healthy snacks are fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grain cereals without added sugar.



**Mazuri Mini Pig Pellets**



**Pumpkins**



**Oatmeal**



**Watermelon**



**Nuts, Seeds, and Grains**



## GENDER

Mini pigs in shelters are often mislabeled gender due to their differences in anatomy from dogs. Simply put, girls pee from under their tail and boys pee from near their belly button.

A female's vulva is directly under the anus. There are typically no outward signs indicating a female has been spayed. The umbilical scar and spay scar are sometimes confused. A female that was spayed very young will have a very small vulva. When females go into heat every 21 days their vulva swells considerably in size.

Males typically have their penis safely tucked away inside a pouch on their abdomen called the prepuce. A male pig's testicles do not hang or dangle the way a dog's does. In mini pigs, the testicles are below the anus sometimes giving the image of butt cheeks. Sometimes this rump area is flat with the testicles set inside the body. Often the most obvious signs of a male being intact is behavior. Intact males, known as boars, put off a very pungent odor and can be sexually aggressive with humping and charging



**Female Vulva (Spayed)**



**Female Vulva (In Heat)**



**Male Before/After Neuter**



**Male Neutered (Barrow)**

## ENRICHMENT

Pigs are highly intelligent animals. As such, they are easily stressed by the change in their environment, they mourn the loss of their family and they may become agitated from boredom. Providing simple enrichment activities will keep the pig mentally stimulated and content, but more importantly will ward off unwanted behaviors that may deter potential adopters. It is true, the way to a pig's heart is through food. Pigs love food and they love a challenge. A simple solution is to make meal times challenging. Instead of a bowl of pellets, sprinkle those pellets in the blankets or hay. This gives the pig a chance to root through the bedding to find all the pieces of food. The same can be done with small portions of whole grain cereal or black oil sunflower seeds. Fruits and vegetables can be tied by a string and hung for a challenging reward. Punch or drill holes in a 2 liter soda bottle then put a handful of pig pellets inside. The pig will push the bottle around as the pellets slowly drop out. A happy pig is an adoptable pig!!



**Hanging Apple**



**Hay Hide**



**Stuffed Toys**



**Treat Dispensing Toys**



**Holes in Water Bottle**

## GAINING TRUST

Trust is hard to come by with a prey animal in a shelter environment. For a pig, winding up in a shelter is a very scary ordeal. It may take longer to earn a mini pig's trust than it is for a dog. Start slow and use food rewards. Instead of throwing their meal in the kennel, sit down for a minute. Just sit inside the kennel or pig area. Don't approach, reach, or chase the pig. Simply sit quietly. They will become curious enough to approach you as you toss pellets of food in their direction. After a couple of quiet sessions they will likely be eating out of your hand. As prey animals, pigs tend to be terrified of being restrained, held, or picked up. Avoid this whenever possible as the panic will ruin the trust that has been built. Luring the pig into a crate with food and moving the crate from one location to another is the safest and least stressful for all involved.



**Hog Haven Farm**



**Learning to Trust**



**Ralphy's Retreat Sanctuary**

## HANDLING AGGRESSION

Mini pigs in a shelter environment may show aggressive behaviors for a variety of reasons. Understanding their behavior will help to manage it while keeping personnel safe. Pig aggression comes from fear, sexual aggression of intact animals, or the normal herd hierarchy as they try to establish dominance. Pigs can charge, lunge, head swipe, or bite trying to push you around. Protect yourself by using a sorting board. These can be purchased commercially or you can use something at the shelter. A flat hard object works well as a sorting board, such as a wooden board with handle cutouts. Do not ever antagonize the pig but use the sorting board to protect yourself from their advances.



**Sorting Board**



**Pigs With An Attitude**



**Mini Pig Tusks**



**Sorting Board**

## IMPORTANCE OF SPAY / NEUTER

All pigs need to be spayed or neutered before they are placed for adoption. Intact pigs make horrible pets. This impacts your shelter by increasing the adoption return rate from pigs that did not make good pets. While pigs are intact, females will go into heat every 21 days. During this time they may become agitated, pushy, or aggressive. If they are not spayed they are at very high risk of deadly uterine infections and reproductive tumors. Mini pigs have had tumors in excess of 100 lbs surgically removed in emergency spay surgeries. Intact males, boars, are even worse. Their testosterone drives them sexual aggression. Boars will charge, head swipe with their tusks, bite, and emit a horrible stench. Intact boars can be quite dangerous to be around. In addition, pregnancy is a serious concern. Males are fertile as young as 8 weeks old and must be separated from their mother and sisters until 2 weeks after their neuter. Females may go into their first heat as early as 12 weeks old. Females are at risk of pregnancy at a dangerously young age. A young pregnancy is likely to result in the death of the sow and/or piglets, or expensive complications when veterinary intervention is needed. Spay and neuter contracts are not enough to protect the pigs. If at all possible, provide spay and neuters before the pigs leave the facility. If this is not possible, please educate the adoptive families and encourage them to spay or neuter their adopted pig immediately.



**Pig Impregnated At Shelter**



**Pig With 100+ lb Uterine Tumor**

## FINDING ADOPTIVE HOMES

Mini pig advocates are an excellent resource to help promote your adoptable pigs. Facebook is often used to help find homes for adoptable pigs. If you have pigs available for adoption, please contact the AMPA Rescue Advocates. We would be glad to help network your adoptable pigs. In addition, these groups on Facebook are very valuable in finding quality adoptive homes: Pre Loved Pigs, Mini Pig Education, Pig Finder, Mini Pig Owners, Pigs Needing Homes. For more ideas, visit the AMPA Rescue Advocates website link in the "ADDITIONAL RESOURCES" section below.



**Pig Out & About**



**Making Friends**



**Family Researching Pigs As Pets**

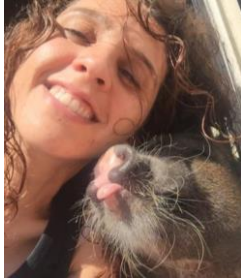


## SCREENING ADOPTIVE HOMES

Screening homes for a pig adoption is a bit different than for dogs and cats. Minimum screening and adoption requirements vary by facility. At minimum, the potential adopters should own their own home, be zoned for owning a pig by their town or county, have pig experience or knowledge, understand pig behaviors and health needs, have a securely fenced in yard, and the ability to keep dogs separate from pigs. For more detailed information, please visit the AMPA Rescue Advocates website link in the "ADDITIONAL RESOURCES" section below.



**Adopted!**



**Loved!**



**Rescued!**



**Loved!**



**Adopted!**

Thank you for taking the time to educate yourself, employees, and volunteers on humane care and responsible pig ownership. Your efforts are changing lives!



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional information on mini pigs as pets please visit

[AmericanMiniPigAssociation.com](http://AmericanMiniPigAssociation.com)

For rescue and adoption resources or assistance please visit AMPA Rescue Advocates website

[AmericanMiniPigRescue.com](http://AmericanMiniPigRescue.com)

To network adoptable pigs AMPA Rescue Advocates Facebook Page

[Facebook.com/AmericanMiniPigRescue](https://Facebook.com/AmericanMiniPigRescue)

Or email the AMPA Rescue Advocate committee

[RescueAdvocates@AmericanMiniPigRescue.com](mailto:RescueAdvocates@AmericanMiniPigRescue.com)



## The American Mini Pig Association Microchip Standard Placement Guidelines

Microchips have become the leading form of permanent identification for pets. The American Mini Pig Association recommends microchips for all pet pigs. Registering the microchip with current contact information will help to protect the pig in case of emergency, disaster, theft, loss, or the pig is taken to a shelter. The standard placement of the microchip in a pet pig is subcutaneously at the base of the left ear on the scutiform cartilage. Microchip placement between the shoulder blades in pigs is not recommended due to the difference in skin from dogs. The pig's skin does not "tent" the same as a dog's skin would for proper placement. In addition, chip readability is compromised in areas of increased fat deposits such as the shoulder area.

The American Mini Pig Association is dedicated to reuniting lost pets with their families. Microchip information will be stored in AMPA's nationwide database of Registered Members. In addition, lost pets will be networked on the AMPA website, Facebook page and other social media outlets.

Scanning a mini pig for a microchip is of equal importance as correct chip placement.. The AMPA recommends placement of microchips behind the left ear. However, many pigs may be chipped in other areas. When scanning a mini pig, the scan area should include the region behind both ears, the length of the neck, around the shoulders, as well as a thorough check for microchips that have migrated away from the implant site.

The American Mini Pig Association would like to thank the following veterinarians in their guidance and assistance in developing this standard microchip placement for mini pigs as well as published recommendations by the World Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress.

Cathy Zolicani, DVM  
Julie Ann McGwin, DVM  
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Paula Hardin, DVM  
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