

Indoor Living

Yes, Potbellied Pigs generally make good house pets!

All pigs root. It is the natural instinct of the pig, it's how they find food in nature. You would not want to prevent a human baby from learning to walk, so why prevent your pig from rooting! It does not mean you allow the pig to root your entire house. Instead, give the pig plenty of outside time in a secure run, or take long walks so they can root outside. Or, make a rooting-box filled with rocks or small to medium hard rubber balls. Sprinkle a couple of treats in the box to teach the pig what it's used for. You can also sprinkle some Cheerios or pieces of carrot, plain air-popped pop corn, etc., into a large pile of blankets to teach the pig to root in it's blankets.

Pigs are intelligent, curious animals. You will need to pig-proof your home, just as you would baby-proof your home for a toddler. Some people will clear off a lower shelf or two, well within reach of the pig's snout and put piggy toys there. The pig will quickly learn to take toys off its shelf only, making a happy pig and happy people. Pigs often watch where their food comes from, so they can learn to open cabinets and even the refrigerator! Plants may also need to be put up in high places, so they are not eaten or spilled all over your floor.

Your pig will need a soft bed of blankets or pillows. All pigs need a "place" of their own to hide when they are feeling insecure or want to be left alone. This can be a quiet room, a closet or a large animal crate in a corner. You may also want to teach your pig to sleep in a crate or separate room. Someone once wrote a 10-pound pig in the bed is cute, but a 100-pound pig in the bed may not be! Also teaching your pig to sleep in a crate will get it accustomed to being in a crate in case you need to transport the pig for any reason.

Potty Boxes

In cold or rainy weather, indoor pigs may not want to go outside to potty. However, it's best to teach the pig to potty outside, especially male pigs, because they tend to urinate for what seems to be forever! If you choose to use an indoor potty box, select one with low sides or cut down an entrance. Pigs don't like to step up and over something to use the potty. The box must be big enough for the pig to turn around in. If the bottom of the box is slippery, put a no-slip mat in the bottom, under the litter. Avoid using clay litter, as pigs may inhale it (causing pneumonia) or eat it (causing intestinal blockages), both which could be fatal. Pine shavings are inexpensive, old towels can be used, adult diapers or under-pads make good box-liners too and are easy to wash or dispose of. Cedar is also not recommended. Sod, although more expensive, could help your pig get used to going outdoors quicker.

Pigs learn to potty in a particular spot. Choose the potty box location carefully because the pig may not want to change potty spots later. When a pig is very small, take him to the box every hour or at least every two hours when he is awake, as soon as he wakes up, and right after he eats or drinks. If you are not home to closely supervise the pig, you can also confine the pig to a small area with its bed and potty box separated as much as possible. The pig will not use its bed as a potty box, so it will learn to use the litter box. Or, you can put some of the pig's poop into the box, once the pig smells it; it should start to use the box. Do not give the pig free, unsupervised run of the house until he is at least 6 months old. Pigs younger than that are prone to accidents!

Potty Boxes (cont)

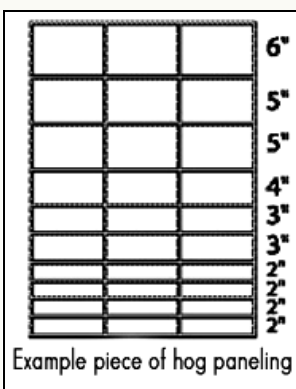
If the accidents are not caught and corrected immediately, housebreaking will be more difficult. If a pig does something once, he remembers. If he does something twice, it's a habit. If he does it three times, you may be out of luck! Close supervision and proper housebreaking early on will help avoid problems in the future. If you catch a pig making a mistake, take him to the litter box and let him finish pottying in the proper place, then praise him. Clean up the mess with a commercial deodorizer made for removing pet odors or vinegar and baking soda. Clean up is important to avoid future accidents in the same spot - pigs have strong noses and good memories! If possible, put a heavy piece of furniture in that spot or a bath mat and the pig's food dish and feed him there for a few days. Pigs do not like to eat and potty in the same places! After a week or so, clean the spot again. Wait a few more days and when the pig is not looking sprinkle some food or a couple of treats in the area. The pig will think the treats sprout from the rug or floor and will not want to potty there again. There are some additional good potty-training tips and litter information here: <http://www.minipiginfo.com/potty-training-tips-and-dos--dents.html>

Outdoor Living

Outdoor pigs need a sturdy, rainproof shed, barn or doghouse. In cold climates, it must also be wind-proof and have enough room for plenty of straw and blankets to keep the pig warm. Ideally outdoor pigs should be kept in small groups for extra body warmth. Remember pigs need plenty of fresh water at all times. In hot weather, they need a small pool or mud puddle to keep cool. In cold weather, be sure not to let their water freeze.

It is not recommended that a pig be kept full time in a run or pen with a cement floor. The pen should give the pig plenty of room to move around, and a place for its potty area away from it's housing and food areas. We like pens no smaller than 8' x 16', with access to areas outside the pen for exercise or a 16 x 16 foot pen (which is the length of the standard hog panels!).

Pigs don't jump high, but they do like to root & dig. A 4-foot high fence will easily keep your pigs in, but will not keep an aggressive dog or other animal out. If you live in an area with stray dogs or other roaming animals and creatures (i.e. kids), you may wish to choose a 6-foot fence.



Hog panel (available from farm stores) is the best and probably most inexpensive and secure fencing material. These panels are used by commercial hog farmers and are good and sturdy, for making sure the pig stays in its pen. Chain-link fencing reinforced with chicken wire at the bottom may also make a suitable pen, but BE SURE there is no place a pig's snout can get stuck, caught or injured. Pigs are curious and will root and look for holes and ways to move the chicken wire. To be sure the pen is completely secure, you should dig a trench about 1 foot deep just inside the chain link fence. Fasten the chicken wire to the lower 6' of the fence and extend it down into the trench. Fill in the trench, burying the wire. You can also put boards into the trench, bury part of the board, and fasten them to the fencing to secure the bottom. Picket or split-rail fences will NOT keep a pig in, but you can attach a hog panel to the fence to secure it. That makes an attractive as well as secure fence! A board on board fence will keep a pig in, but may require reinforcement at the base, so a pig can't dig out beneath it.