

Pigs as pets

November 2019, Primefact 241, Sixth edition

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Introduction

Pigs can make great pets. They have a gregarious, inquisitive nature and are responsive to training. However there are some important things to consider for responsible pig ownership.

Do your homework

There are no true breeds of miniature pigs in Australia. Small pig size is the result of selective breeding for small size. Seek out a reputable breeder. Ask to see the parents of the pig so you have an indication of potential adult size and temperament. However, there are no guarantees that your pig will stay small.

Complaints received by NSW DPI have included pigs growing a lot larger than expected and one pig that became territorial and aggressive to visitors.

Figure 1: Baby pigs are very cute but be sure you have the room to manage them if they grow larger than expected.



Natural behaviour for pigs includes rooting (or digging) with their snout. They like to dig in the garden and can be quite destructive. Ensure that you have enough space and suitable housing for your pig before you buy. Some garden plants are toxic to pigs.

Some people advocate the use of nose rings to minimise the rooting behaviour of pigs but this is not recommended. Rings cause pain when the pigs root and it is the pain that causes a decrease in the rooting behaviour.

Be aware that some pigs can become expert at opening doors and cupboards in search of food if you allow your pet pig inside your house. This might be funny the first time, but can become a nuisance. Keep pigs away from food storage areas such as refrigerators as the doors are easily opened.

Get your pig neutered to avoid unwanted sexual behaviours.

Pigs in the wild and domestic pigs (including pet pigs) will kill and eat small animals. Feral pigs in Australia do kill and eat baby lambs and other wildlife.

Never leave young children alone with a pig.

Legislation

Local councils do have the power to prohibit the keeping of pigs in suburban areas. Always check with council before you purchase your pet pig.

Under *Section 124 Local Government Act 1993* a council may issue an order to restrict the keeping of pigs, particularly if the area is a sensitive area such as a catchment area.

In the *Local Government (General) Regulations Schedule 2, Part 5 Division 1* there are standards for the keeping of pigs (swine) listed in sections 17 and 18.

Section 18 specifically states:

"...swine must not be kept (and swine's dung must not be deposited) within 60 metres (or such greater distance as the council may determine in a particular case) of a dwelling, shop, office, factory, church, or other place of public worship, workshop, school or public place in a city, town, village, or other urban part of an area"

The *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* came into force in NSW in July 2017. Under this legislation everyone in NSW has a general biosecurity duty for the health and wellbeing of livestock in Australia.

Biosecurity is the protection of our economy, environment, and community from the negative impacts of pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants.

There are regulations under the Biosecurity Act which govern livestock identification and movement recording (National Livestock Identification System (NLIS pigs)); as well as stock feeds and prohibited materials (swill feeding) for pigs. Pet pig owners have to comply with these regulations.

The identification of pigs and recording their movement in PigPass falls under the *Biosecurity (National Livestock Identification System (NLIS)) Regulation 2017*.

As a pet pig owner your legal responsibilities include:

- PIC – property identification code – every property with livestock (includes pet pigs) must have a PIC number. Registration for a PIC number is completed through Local Land Services (LLS).
- If your pet will travel to shows or to other properties, or is sold or given to someone else, you need to register for PigPass NVD. Your pig will need to be tagged with an NLIS ear tag if it weighs less than 25kg. Larger pigs can be either branded with a registered swine brand or tagged with an NLIS ear tag. The pig movement or change of ownership must be recorded in the PigPass database from 1st February 2018. Swine brands or NLIS tag information can be found at your LLS. Go to PigPass website to register for PigPass NVD. PigPass Helpdesk 1800 001 458 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).
- It is illegal to feed prohibited pig feed (swill) to pigs. A person must not feed, or allow access to, or fail to prevent access to, human waste food or stock food or any other material containing a mammal product (such as meat (raw or cooked), bone, blood, offal or hide) to a pig unless the feeding of the mammalian product is in accordance with the *Biosecurity Regulation 2017*.
- It is illegal to keep, transport or breed from feral pigs. Feral pigs carry several zoonotic diseases such as Leptospirosis and Brucellosis (*Brucella suis*).

Prohibited pig feed

Prohibited pig feed (swill) regulations are an important component of Australia's biosecurity plan to keep exotic diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) out of Australia. (Please

note: FMD is a disease of cloven hoofed livestock such as sheep, cattle and pigs; and is a different disease to “hand-foot-and-mouth” disease that children can suffer).

“Swill-feeding” is illegal in all states and territories of Australia. A person must not feed, or allow access to, or fail to prevent access to, human waste food, stock food or any other material, containing a mammal product such as meat (raw or cooked), bone, blood, offal or hide) to a pig unless the feeding of the mammalian product is in accordance with the *Biosecurity Regulation 2017*.

More information on prohibited pig feed can be found in [Primefact 637 Swill feeding](#).

More information on feeds that are allowed to be fed to pigs can be found in the brochure [“STOP! Do not feed swill to your pigs.”](#)

Feeding your pig

Pigs are omnivorous and will eat most feedstuffs including grains, eggs, dairy products, fruits and vegetables. The purchase of pig pellets is recommended as these will be formulated with the necessary protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals for a healthy pig.

Very young pigs should be fed at least twice per day with high quality feed such as grain based porridge or moistened pig pellets. Addition of milk powder will improve palatability. Vegetables such as diced carrot and broccoli; fruits such as banana and apple; dairy products such as cheese and yoghurt and bread or biscuits can be fed as treats.

Cool fresh water for drinking should be available at all times.

Establish a routine from the beginning and you will avoid most problems.

Housing

The comfortable temperature range for pigs changes as they mature. Very young pigs do best in a temperature range of 28 to 30°C. Adult pigs are most comfortable with a temperature range of 18 to 22°C.

Provide a sheltered sleep area with a thick bed of straw so the pig can burrow in for warmth in winter. In very cold areas you could provide a dog coat for your pig.

In summer you need to provide a shaded wallow so pigs can wet themselves for cooling. Pigs do not sweat and suffer heat stress when the temperature is above 30°C.

Diseases

Pigs can carry several zoonotic diseases. These are diseases that are transferable from animals to humans and include leptospirosis, brucellosis (*Brucella suis*) and *Streptococcus suis* infection. Pigs are also susceptible to internal and external parasites. You should discuss an appropriate vaccination and worming treatment protocol with your private veterinarian.

Brucella suis is common in feral pigs in Queensland and has been detected in feral pigs in northern NSW. Prevention of this disease is by avoiding contact with feral pigs and their

products. Brucellosis (*Brucella suis*) has been detected in dogs that have been pig hunting in northern NSW, and dogs that have been fed raw feral pig meat.

Pigs can also become infected with the human influenza virus. Influenza A (H1N1) was first diagnosed in pigs in NSW in 2009. This virus has become a seasonal virus in the human population. Infection in pigs did not show systemic clinical signs typical of Classical Swine Influenza which is exotic to Australia.

Rehoming your pig

If you get to a stage where you cannot manage to properly care for your pig or due to circumstance you can no longer keep your pig please talk to your local RSPCA for assistance with rehoming.

Talk to the breeder from whom you purchased the pig – they may have other customers happy to take the pig off your hands.

If you sell or gift your pig to someone else, remember your legal responsibilities and provide the new owner with a properly branded or tagged pig and a completed PigPass NVD. The transfer must also be recorded on the PigPass website.

Do not release your pig into the bush or on farms. Feral pigs adversely affect sheep and grain production in NSW as well as the natural environment. Feral pigs cost our primary producers around \$13.5 million in production losses with up to \$15.5 million spent on vertebrate pest control annually.

More information

[Primefact 637 Swill Feeding](#)

[Zoonoses – animal diseases that can infect people](#)

[Primefact 1263 Zoonotic disease risk – feral pigs](#)

[Primefact 1001 Brucellosis \(*Brucella suis*\) in pigs](#)

[Primefact 1148 External parasites of pigs](#)

[Primefact 1149 Internal parasites of pigs](#)

[Local Land Services](#) and contact number 1300 795 299

[PigPass website](#) and Helpline 1800 001 458 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm)

[NSW DPI Biosecurity](#)

Reference number PUB19/558

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