

THE MYTHOLOGICAL "TEACUP" PIG



**THIS PIG MAY
APPEAR "TEACUP"
BUT IT IS JUST
A NEWBORN....**

By now, you have heard and read about the widely advertised "Teacup Pigs." These are the "Micro-Mini Pigs," "Dandies," "Pixie Pigs," "Pocket Pigs," "Nano Pigs" and other "specialty-bred" pigs that breeders claim will not grow more than 15-30 pounds. Those are all just fancy names made up by breeders, but all miniature pigs within the United States come from the same line. It is true that when miniature potbellied pigs are first born, they can weigh as little as 3 to 5 pounds, but a healthy normal potbellied pig will grow anywhere from 100 to 200 pounds, sometimes more. Breeders that are selling those "Teacup Pigs" show people their pigs that are only a few days or weeks old, and tell them that their pigs will stay small if you do not feed them a lot. HOWEVER, underfeeding a pig, or any animal for that matter, will cause serious health problems and deformities. Therefore, the so-called "teacup" or "micro-mini" pigs, are just normal potbellied pigs that have been chronically underfed and malnourished in an attempt to keep them small. Their life span is maybe five years or less. This is because the pig might stay tiny (if underfed), but the organs continue to grow as for a normal size pig. Many breeders are frantically trying to breed smaller potbellied pigs in hopes that the smaller size will attract more buyers. In virtually every case, what we have found was a normal potbellied pig that has been chronically underfed and malnourished in an attempt to keep it small. Every year hundreds of potbellied pigs are abandoned, "thrown away" or die, due to lack of information and knowledge and because buyers had unrealistic expectations, or were given the wrong facts. In addition, underfeeding often causes aggressiveness because the pig is not being fed properly and is constantly hungry. This information has been verified with numerous sanctuaries and knowledgeable pig people. In the few instances where a very small (less than 20 pounds) pig has been bred, it has been the result of inbreeding or very concentrated cross-breeding. These pigs tend to be sickly and unhealthy pigs with a myriad of health problems and very short life spans. A normal healthy potbellied pig can live from 12 to 20+ years. The cute tiny "teacup" pigs you see in photos on "teacup pig" websites and "teacup" ads are merely just newborn babies; they are only teacup-size for a short while. Those breeders are only out to make \$\$\$\$ and they often sell pigs that are too young to be weaned, and often they are not neutered or spayed (an extra expense for the buyer).

SCAMPP members, sanctuaries and shelters receive calls weekly from people who have purchased these "teacup" pigs and have become very disappointed that their pigs did not stay as tiny as promised. Therefore, there are many homeless, abandoned, abused and neglected "teacup" pigs in shelters and sanctuaries and there are not enough homes and shelters for them all, meaning many are euthanized. We constantly receive requests from owners and shelters who want us to place these no longer "teacup-sized" pigs. For that reason, we advocate spaying & neutering and discourage breeding. Our reasoning is: WHY should breeders bring any more pigs into the world that will be dumped later when folks learn the truth that their "teacup" pigs do not stay "teacup" size. We strongly feel existing pigs need loving homes FIRST. To buy from breeders only encourages breeders to breed more, which in turn causes the older pigs to die in shelters, sanctuaries & foster care or abandoned and left to die alone out in the deserts, foreclosed homes, or turned loose on the streets. These already-existing pigs deserve and need loving and caring homes with true pet lovers.

In addition, people oftentimes purchase those pigs without checking their zoning ordinances. Many cities and counties do not allow miniature pigs, mainly because the officials do not know the facts regarding how domesticated, clean and quiet these pigs can be. Therefore many of these pigs are confiscated, turned in or dumped, due to Animal Control violations.

Caring pig owners have heard story after story about these "teacup" breeds of pigs that did not "stay small" and have personally seen (may even own) one or more of those "micro-mini" or "teacup pigs" that are now the size of any other normal potbellied pig.

The term "miniature pig" is a term used to describe "small" mature pigs. Miniature pigs are generally considered to be about 1/10 the size of a commercial farm pig. Given that farm pigs can approach and even exceed 1,000 pounds when full-grown, it is obvious to see that the term "miniature" is both relative and very subjective. Keep in mind that weight is often not the best way to describe a pig. Pigs are very solid and "hard-bodied." It does not take a very "big" pig to weigh 100 pounds. It is often best to describe a pig in terms of size, not weight. In dealing with inexperienced pig people, we often ask them to describe the size of their pig in relation to the size of a dog. Most people can relate to and visualize the size of a dog better than they can a pig. An average potbellied pig at maturity will probably be in the 100 to 175 pound range if not overweight. This is the size of a small to medium sized dog in terms of height and length. We have seen potbellied pigs at well over 400 pounds; but those pigs have simply been grossly overfed and under-exercised and/or have been cross-bred with other pigs - even with farm pigs. The pig's parents size is not a guarantee how big it's offspring as a healthy adult potbellied pig will become (much like in human nature). Pig owners can affect their pig's weight through feeding and exercise, but not the pig's eventual size. Potbellied pigs can continue to grow well into their fourth and fifth year. Therefore, realistically speaking, a 15" to 24" tall, full-grown 100 to 200+ pound potbellied pig is a "miniature" compared to farm hogs.

We cannot stress it enough: BEWARE OF BREEDERS!!! Most breeders are only in business to make money. They will misinform you and tell you anything to encourage you to buy from them. Also keep in mind that pigs can breed when they are only 3 to 4 months of age. Therefore, naturally if they have bred the parents at only 3 or 4 months of age, the parents will obviously still be fairly small, yet the breeder will tell you the parents are "full-grown" but that is not true; remember, pigs continue grow until four or five years of age.

If you still want to purchase a "teacup pig," and INSIST on buying one, you could force the seller to write up a contract stating that if the pig grows to over the weight "promised" at one, two and three years of age, you get all your money back and/or the seller agrees to take the pig back (if you haven't fallen in love with it already which naturally is very easy to do if you are a committed and responsible animal lover). If everyone who purchases these "micro-mini teacup pigs" set up such a contract, hopefully, the seller will be discouraged from making such ridiculous claims and a penalty will be incurred right where it hurts...in the pocket book. But beware, read the fine print in the contract, because most times the breeder will insert a clause stating that the contract is null and void if you do not feed the pig according to their feeding instructions (which is usually not the proper diet, or includes a specialty over-priced food that must be ordered only from them or online). We have compared feed labels of their specialty feed and feed you can purchase locally at a much lower cost. Their feed most of the time is by-products, midlings and sometimes unhealthy ingredients. You can get healthier whole grain feed locally for less money.

We can ADOPT tame, sociable, lovable miniature pigs for free or next to nothing (depending on whether the pig needs vet services). We require home checks to make sure you are properly set-up, educated and zoned to own a miniature pig. We network with rescue organizations and shelters to place pigs who need loving homes. Please take a look at the Adoption pages in our newsletters, on our website, on our Facebook page and at <http://www.petfinder.com> to see current pigs that are waiting and need someone to love and care for them.