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No other nominations were received.

Yeas: All (4)  
Nays: None  
Absent: Packard

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 1, at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment:

Motion by Saeger, supported by Pearson, to adjourn at 7:50 p.m.

Yeas: All (4)  
Nays: None  
Absent: Packard

In

# The Voice of the Professionals **NACA NEWS**



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## **OUT OF THE BARN AND INTO THE HOUSE**



photo by R. Schwab, Bothell, WA

### **Potbellied Pigs --**

- House Pets or Livestock?
- What kinds of laws are needed?
- Just how big is a MINIATURE pig?
- Plus a court case—Can a house ever be a HOGPEN?

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### **ALSO INSIDE:**

- John Snyder Receives Awards
- Letters, training info and NACA 100 update
- Editor's R & R page...

### **AND MORE**

# Potbellied Pigs—Public Swooning over Swine

In animal control, it is a fact of life that each new fad pet presents ACOs with another set of educational and operational problems. When a particular creature becomes popular, we have to ask ourselves: Does this animal present health risks to people? Can people take care of this animal? How do we handle complaints? Is legislation needed?

Our focus in this issue is again on a fad animal — the Vietnamese potbellied pig.

We may not get answers to all the above questions in this issue, but we'll try to learn enough about potbellied pigs and the problems they present to provide a starting point to develop policy or draft legislation.

Many of us have heard the claims about Vietnamese miniature potbellied pigs — "They are smarter than dogs, they are naturally housebroken, clean, affectionate, quiet, don't need a lot of exercise" etc. Potbellied pigs have been called "the yuppie pet of choice" and are catching on fast in many areas.

From the evidence so far, it appears that potbellied pigs are not causing a significant number of complaints. Several agencies reported having one or two of them at their shelters and these were animals that had escaped and were retrieved by their owners.

In this edition, we will try to learn as much as possible about the animals and examine how some agencies across the country are handling them. We would do well to arm ourselves with as much information on the potbellied pig as possible, because, as usual, many breeders are selling animals to uninformed customers with unfortunate results. Some ACOs are predicting that the animals will continue to gain in popularity and eventually present a serious overpopulation problem, just like dogs and cats.

Also, because pig owners are challenging ordinances which outlaw farm animals in urban areas, it is a good idea for local governments to look closely at their laws to see where potbellied pigs might fit into the picture.

by Martin Prince

Pam Burney, in North Richland Hills, Texas, is regulating potbellies by agreeing that they are not farm animals.

"What we have done is say 'Fine, they are not farm animals. But they aren't dogs or cats, either.' We classify them as exotic pets — they aren't dangerous, so are therefore legal with a permit. But to get a permit, residents must comply with our list of requirements."

The requirements are extensive, including documentation of proper vaccinations, name and address of attending veterinarian and health certificates and detailed information from the breeder. Animals must not be left unattended outdoors or allowed to get within 50 feet of another dwelling during exercise times.

"Because we have classified them as exotic pets, they cannot be left unattended outdoors. So the owners must have the pigs in the house most of the time," Burney says. "Most people, when they learn that, decide they do not want a pet pig after all."

John Mays, ACO in Olathe, Kansas, says potbellies have not caught on in his area, but he has seen them in pet stores.

"And they do smell," Mays laughs. "Just like big pigs."

Mays chuckles and says "Potbellied pigs would be considered to be 'swine' by most people around here, because, uh, in Kansas. I think people know better than to keep pigs in the house."

Potbellies do seem to be more popular the farther you get from where hogs might usually be found. They are popular in areas such as Fairfax County, Virginia (which is highly urbanized), and Beverly Hills, a West Coast hot-spot for the pet porkers.

One factor which is contributing to the popularity of potbellies is the pro-potbelly attitude of the press. Most newspaper reports covering court battles between pig owners and municipalities have presented the cases with headlines

like "Pig-headed town gives the boot to pet porkers" and "After Owner Wins in Court, This Little Pig's Back Home."

Typically, newspaper stories are complete with glowing reports from owners and breeders who roundly proclaim that the animals don't smell, bite or shed hair, are quiet and simple to housebreak and don't carry diseases like dogs and cats.

Kitty Brebner, who runs a potbellied pig rescue in Kent, Washington, has found homes for 50 pigs in the last two years. Brebner says that many people are misled by irresponsible breeders who have a tendency to downplay the actual size of an adult miniature potbellied pig.

"They talk about thirty pounds — but 70 is more like it," Brebner said.

Jackie Beshur, an outspoken animal trainer and potbellied pig breeder from Carnation, Washington, agrees. Like Brebner, she is a member of the Washington State Potbellied Pig Association and is involved in breeding as well as rescue of animals that have not worked out.

"One problem is that the newspapers usually show pictures of piglets — not adult animals. A ten or fifteen pound piglet is very cute. People don't realize that the mature animal is quite large."

Beshur says that breeders selling out of the backs of pickup trucks or over the phone are more than willing to perpetuate the myth that Vietnamese miniature potbellied pigs are the size of a large house cat.

"When they make a sale, they say 'Oh yeah, it will get a little bigger,'" Beshur said.

In the view of this writer, the term miniature alone creates problems. Miniature is a relative term, and it becomes very confusing to urban people who really have no idea how large a regular size pig is, or how large a hog will get if fed heavily for any length of time. Many urban people would be surprised to know that a hog on the farm weighing less than a human baby at birth, reaches 250 pounds in six months.

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# Rendezvous '92 - May 21-23, 1992

## Registration

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Org. \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check or purchase order for:

Three days:	\$185.00 _____	(After April 15th):	\$42.00 _____
Two days:	\$135.00 _____	Tillicum Guest:	\$42.00 _____
One day:	\$85.00 _____	Banquet guest:	\$25.00 _____
Tillicum Village:	\$21.00 _____	TOTAL:	\$ _____

You will be assigned to three workshops. Please indicate your preference by marking the following topics with numbers 1 thru 6:

The Budget Tap Dance  
 Dare to Communicate  
 Organizational Stress  
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 Risk Management  
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Enclose application, check or money order and mail to:

NACA, P.O. BOX 1600, INDIANOLA, WA 98342 1-800-828-6474

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Hogs kept for two years or more typically weigh 500 to 800 pounds. Compared to swine of these proportions, Vietnamese potbellies are indeed miniature. But they are not miniature compared to most popular household pets.

Potbellied pigs, like other swine, grow rapidly to their mature weight. They can reproduce at three months. Not only will they exceed the commonly quoted "mature weight" of 30 to 50 pounds, they will continue to put on weight unless their diet is strictly controlled, and, like a hog retained on the farm for breeding, will grow larger yet.

John Lehnhardt, an animal keeper at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., cares for three potbellied pigs. The oldest is three years old and weighs 350 pounds, the zoo's two sows weigh 140 and 160 pounds.

"These animals get big—real big—unless they are closely monitored," Lehnhardt said.

Lehnhardt drew the ire of Fairfax County breeders and owners by testifying at hearings before county elected officials. Lehnhardt pointed out that miniature potbellied pigs are not always so miniatrue.

Lehnhardt laughs at the criticism he received from so-called "registry services" and breeders.

"They testified at the same hear-

ings, saying our animals at the zoo are not true Vietnamese miniature potbellied pigs. Baloney. Our animals are direct descendants of the first 16 animals brought into this country," Lehnhardt said.

According to Lehnhardt, the miniature-potbelly registry service which today insists that the three zoo porkers are not true Vietnamese potbellies, did in fact visit the zoo when the pigs were smaller, urging him to have the zoo register the animals with their organization.

Based on this information, it appears that at one point in time, these three animals were genetically pure—but later, the same exact animals (not their offspring) were no longer carrying the same genetic makeup—a remarkable if not astounding genetic phenomenon indeed.

Is it true that potbellied pigs are really as easy to take care of and as trouble free as some claim?

There is no question that the animals love people and develop cute personalities. They can be trained to use a litter box. According to people in the pig-rescue business, however, they do have special needs which are not being met by uninformed owners.

Jackie Beshur insists that potbellied pigs need outdoor rooting and wallowing areas.

"When I get inquiries from

people, the first thing I do is find out where they live. These animals are rural. I won't sell 'em to people who don't have outside room for them," Beshur says.

The Humane Society of the United States has issued a statement opposing the keeping of potbellied pigs as house pets because of the animals' need to root and wallow — needs which cannot be met inside an urban dwelling or in the yard.

The claim that these animals are disease free is also stretching the truth a bit. Potbellies are kept disease free with the proper care, like any other animal. Veterinarians servicing the animals are recommending from eight to eleven shots between birth and weaning for each animal.

Sandy Johnson, president of the Washington State Potbellied Pig Association, points out that breeders are also selling animals by saying "They are wonderful because they don't need any exercise." According to Johnson, that is completely untrue. Johnson says she frequently deals with owners who are having problems with their animals, and often the problem is lack of exercise.

"Some of these people will do what I tell them, and exercise their animals, others won't take the time and go ahead and give their animals up," Johnson says.

There have already been court

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## PIGS--continued from page 7

cases across the nation in which owners of potbellied pigs have appealed rulings against livestock within cities, by arguing that potbellied pigs are not farm animals but house pets.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, a county district court ruling against the owner of a potbellied pig was overturned by an appellate court judge who ruled that the county ordinance against swine did not clearly prohibit keeping a pig in a human domicile. Judge Rosemarie Annunziata, Nineteenth Judicial Circuit of Virginia, ruled that it was not clear to a reasonably intelligent person that it would be illegal to keep a pig in a house, though the law prohibited "any hogpen within 100 yards of a dwelling house, store, restaurant, office, church, school or other public building..." and then succinctly defined a hogpen as "any enclosure."

The most interesting part of Annunziata's decision favoring potbellied pigs was her detailed referral to nursery rhymes and children's stories about pigs, which, the judge maintained, shows that "the adaptability of pigs to homeliving is a well-known phenomenon to which most Americans are introduced in early childhood. See, e.g., 'This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home.'"

Clearly, to those who penned the county ordinance, it was probably obvious that prohibiting pigpens would also prohibit pigs. Indeed, residents of Fairfax County might have taken it as an insult if their elected officials had written a law saying "residents of Fairfax County are not allowed to breed, raise, or keep pigs in their houses."

Of course, there is not total agreement among elected officials on what kinds of regulations should be used to handle potbellies. Barbara Snow, head of animal control in Fairfax County, would like to see the animals allowed, under a permitting system, but elected officials in her area have stuck to their definition of potbellies as swine and therefore illegal in urban areas (although the language of the county ordinance will need to be tightened to satisfy judges such as Rosemarie Annunziata).

In Tacoma, Washington, the opposite situation arose: the city was ready to redefine potbellies as house pets, rather than swine, with no questions asked. Jeanne Werner, head of Animal Control for Tacoma/Pierce County objected just in time and so far has succeeded in getting the city to consider her recommendations, which include limits on the number of animals that can be kept, spaying and neutering requirements, enclosure guidelines and cleanliness standards.

Werner is not necessarily in favor of allowing the animals, even under her proposed strict permitting system, however:

"The problem is, what do you do next? There's pygmy goats, miniature horses...Are we going to have to allow them in the city also?"

The point is, if you must bow to pressure from elected officials, it appears that it would be a very good idea to define the animals as exotics, or exotic pets, so that they can be controlled within some kind of regulatory framework. Allowing the animals as "house pets" opens the door to a bevy of other creatures.

Mike Burgwin makes a good point when he says that most animal shelters are not equipped to handle animals like pigs. If potbellied pigs do become as popular as dogs and cats, local governments will have to come up with funding to provide facilities to handle unwanted animals. Elected officials who are being pressured by an uninformed public to allow potbellied pigs as pets might be convinced otherwise if they are reminded of the cost.

In our last issue of NACA News, we picked up some useful tips on dealing with elected officials at budget time. It may be possible to tactfully employ some of the same methods here—perhaps by explaining that "it may be difficult to provide needed services to pig owners without cutting into services already provided to dog owners." In this way, the potbellied pig question would be presented in true political terms — voter blocks.

## NACA PRESIDENT JOHN SNYDER RECEIVES AWARDS

NACA members should be proud of their president, John Snyder, for earning two important civic awards last fall. John, who is Director of Alachua County Animal Control, received the Rosemary Ames Award from the American Humane Association at the National Training Conference in Denver this September. This award was established in 1983 and is given to individuals for excellence in teaching at training seminars sponsored by American Humane.

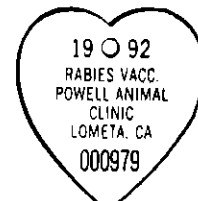
American Humane commended John for over 17 years of work in animal care and control, citing his key role in the designing and construction of the current facility and his involvement as a consultant on at least a dozen other shelter projects nationwide. In a press release from American Humane, John also received praise for his leadership in Florida in helping pass the state's Animal Control Officer Training Law and for establishing state requirements for the use of tranquilizers by animal control officers.

John was also awarded the Citizen of the Year Award by the Florida Veterinary Medical Association (FVMA). Larry Lynch, Executive Director of the FVMA said John was chosen because of his outstanding contributions to animal welfare and health.

"He just stood out among the finalists. This is the first time I know of that the award has gone to a person in animal control," Lynch said.

On behalf of everyone in NACA, "Good going, John, and keep up the good work!"

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