Care of Pot Bellied Pigs

**Introduction:**
Pot bellied pigs first entered the United States in 1985. Since then there popularity as a household pet has been growing rapidly. Newborn pigs weigh around two pounds, but mature animals can reach 5-100 pounds. There lifespan is between 12-15 years. Female pot bellied pigs reach maturity at 7 months and males at 5 months.

**Captivity Requirements:**
Pot bellied pigs are comfortable in temperatures between 60°-70°F. Pigs tolerate cold temperatures better than hot temperatures. Shade and access to water to necessary for any pig housed outside. They also require a nesting area for sleeping. Exercise, preferably grazing outdoors, is essential to prevent obesity.

**Diet:**
We recommend specialized pot bellied pig chow, which is available at specialized pet stores. The pig’s higher fiber requirements can be met with the occasional fresh vegetables and fruits and hay. As could be expected adult pigs can be prone to obesity, so it is best never to over feed a pig. Ideally, pigs should be allowed to graze outside as often as possible.

**Medical Care:**
Pot bellied pigs should have a medical check up once a year including vaccination. There is some debate as to exactly which of the commercial swine vaccines should be used for pet pigs. Unless your pet pig will come in contact with commercial swine, we do not recommend vaccines at this time. Vaccines for young pigs can be started at 6 weeks of age and followed by a booster 3 weeks later. After the booster, the vaccines are given one time yearly. A fecal exam for parasites is also recommended. Due to the 21 day estrus cycle in female pigs, many owners prefer to spay the animal. Castration is frequently done in male pigs to control the odor. Both procedures can be done while the pig is young. Males can be neutered as soon as their testicles descend and females can be spayed at as early as 3 months of age.

Most illness seen in pot bellied pigs is a result of sub-optimal husbandry practices, such as inappropriate diet, overheating, or trauma from other animals. However, other medical conditions can occur. If any signs of illness are observed, the pig should be evaluated by an experienced veterinarian.