

The Myth of 'Teacup' Potbellied Pigs

The recent craze for mythical “teacup” potbellied pigs will result in increasing numbers of these animals ending up at overburdened sanctuaries, shelters and rescue groups when the pigs outgrow their purported small size.

“You can call them ‘teacup,’ ‘mini,’ ‘micro,’ or ‘thimble,’ but the truth is the supposedly tiny pigs do not exist,” says Yvonne McIntosh, manager of Piggy Paradise at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. “People who think they are buying a pig that will stay small are being fooled. Unscrupulous breeders are breeding potbellied pigs who are less than a year old. By the time the litter is born, the parents are only about eight months old and not close to being their full size.



“It can take four to five years for pigs to finish growing. The breeders tell folks that the piglets will be no bigger than the parents and the buyer doesn’t realize the parent pigs are nowhere near full-grown themselves. Unfortunately, most people believe these breeders/sellers and do not educate themselves by researching before they buy the pigs.

“When the novelty of owning a potbellied pig wears off, or the pig becomes 150 to 300 pounds instead of the 40 pounds it was ‘supposed’ to be, or people find out their local zoning doesn’t allow for pigs, there will be no place for these now homeless pets to go.”

Pets should never be viewed as a designer item to be acquired and discarded like the latest fad. Unfortunately, these so-called teacup pigs fall into the designer category and are in jeopardy of being purchased solely because they’re considered something new and different; they are then surrendered when the novelty wears off and the reality sets in that the pig will not remain small.

Anyone who brings any kind of pet into his or her life should do so with full knowledge of the care required and a commitment to meet that animal’s needs for both physical and psychological health for life. Thank you for caring about potbellied pigs!

Yvonne McIntosh is the potbellied pig specialist, adoption coordinator and manager for Best Friends Animal Society. If you have questions related to anything piggy, please send an e-mail to yvonnem@bestfriends.org.