

CREATURES OF THE CREATOR

Part Seven: The Pig

What comes to mind when you hear the word *pig*? The pig has developed a bit of a bad reputation over the years, hasn't it? When many think of pigs, they think of animals that are dirty, lazy, sweaty, and messy. When a person is gluttonous or sloppy, we might carelessly refer to him as a *pig*. Messy rooms in our houses are sometimes called *pigpens*. Yet all is not quite as it seems.



Highly Intelligent

Contrary to what one might think or expect, the pig is actually a highly intelligent creature. Scientists consider them equal or even superior to dogs in mental ability. A researcher at Pennsylvania State University demonstrated the ability of pigs to respond to verbal commands and play simple computer games using their snouts to move joysticks.

They have an excellent sense of direction and can find their way home even across great distances.

When in groups, pigs learn to know other pigs and exhibit greeting and friendship behavior. It is estimated by some that pigs may have up to 30 "personal friends" in their social group. They also make use of a wide variety of sounds for communication. They chomp their jaws, grunt, roar, squeal, snort, and make other noises. Female pigs even have a special grunt they use to tell their piglets that it is time to eat.

Physical Characteristics



Baby Pygmy Hog

We all know what pigs look like. Their weight ranges from 77-770 pounds with some domestic breeds reaching as high as 1000 pounds. The smallest species of pig is the *pygmy hog* which is only about two feet in length and weighs 15-20 pounds. Found in India, the pygmy hog was thought to be extinct until its rediscovery in October 2006.

The largest pig recorded in history (1930s) was Big Bill. He was a Poland China hog measuring five feet high, nine feet long, and weighing 2,552 pounds. Even this giant hog would be small in comparison to Big Bill!



Giant Hog

A pig's snout is very sensitive and it is used to find a wide variety of food (Pigs are omnivores, but wild hogs often eat fruits, roots, mushrooms, grasses, worms, snakes, and rodents. Domestic animals raised for food may have different diets.) Because of their fine sense of smell, pigs have been used to hunt for truffles, a highly desirable tuber which can sell for as much as \$2700 per pound. The hunter has to be quick, though, or the pig will eat the truffle as soon as it is found!

Pigs are often found wallowing in the mud or other cool places. Interestingly, this is not because they especially enjoy being dirty, but because they have no sweat glands and must find other ways to keep cool.

Habits and Habitat

The bond between piglets and mother is very strong. Wild pigs build nests both for birthing and for protecting the young pigs once they are born. Sometimes the mother will spend up to ten hours building a suitable nest.



The piglets remain in the nest for about two weeks. After that, mother and piglets return to the rest of the herd. They are weaned over the course of about 12 weeks and become fully mature at 8-10 months of age.

Pigs can be found in a wide variety of habitat, and live on every continent except Antarctica, including many oceanic islands. Wild pigs were common in the days of Jesus, ranging throughout Asia Minor.

Pigs In the Bible

God gave the Israelites special instructions concerning which animals they were allowed to eat and which ones they were not allowed to eat. The pig was an "unclean" animal.

Leviticus 11:1-3 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: ³ You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud . . . ⁷ And the pig,

though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you.

- Why do you think the LORD gave the nation of Israel such laws about eating? What purpose could these laws serve?
- Discuss: Lev 10:10-11; Is 35:8; Col 2:13-17; Mk 7:14-23; 1 Jn 1:9

This verse from Proverbs references the pig in a memorable way!

Proverbs 11:22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

Jesus here illustrates a point using the pig:

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."

- What do you think Jesus meant by this comment?

Read Mark 5:1-13. This is one of the most well-known Bible stories involving pigs. What does this lesson teach us about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Read Luke 15:15. What is the context of this verse? What does our Heavenly Father do for us so that we aren't left *feeding the pigs*?



Selected Resources

<http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/animals/pigs/pigs.html>
<http://www.answers.com/topic/pigs-three-different-ones>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pig>
http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/3600/3681/pig_2_md.gif