

GETTING STARTED WITH KUNEKUNES



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Kunekune pigs (pronounced “cooney cooney”) originated in New Zealand. Kunekune means “fat and round” in the Māori language. We don’t know the exact origin of the breed, but it’s believed that pigs were brought to New Zealand by whalers and traders. The various breeds mingled and were domesticated by the indigenous people, the Māori. In the late 1970’s, the breed was ‘rediscovered’ but there were only about 50 purebred kunekunes left. In 1978, wildlife park owners Michael Willis and John Simister began a conservation program with only 6 purebred sows and 3 purebred boars. These two men single handedly saved the Kunekune from extinction.

Once more herds were reestablished in New Zealand, it became clear that exporting of the breed was important. The conservationists were afraid that if disease or other natural disasters struck in New Zealand this would wipe the breed out completely. In 1992, the first kunekunes were exported to the UK and in 1996 the first kunekunes arrived in the USA. There have been four other imports into the USA occurring in 2005, 2010, and 2012.

FOOD

This is a picture of what our adult pigs get to eat twice a day, except the black oil sunflower (those are once a day).

Most importantly, we have a pelletized pig and sow feed. An adult pig gets about 1 1/2 to 2 cups twice a day. We previously used Purina Nature’s Match Pig and Sow. We have now switched to a custom blend feed we get from Petrus Feed in Alexandria, LA. It is a 16% protein feed with added Lysine but it has to be purchased by the ton. If you don’t have access to locally milled feed, we still recommend the Purina Nature’s Match. Your feed should have 14-16% protein, 1% Lysine, and minimal sodium. Make sure you’re feeding a Pig and Sow, not a Grower/Finisher feed. A grower pellet has different nutritional properties for a faster growing meat pig. All you will do is make your kunekunes fat feeding a grower pellet. It’s ESSENTIAL to give your pigs some pelletized feed for proper health and nutrition. Even with good pasture to graze, pigs don’t get the proper vitamins and minerals (iron, selenium, magnesium, etc.) or protein content from forage alone.

Next, we have alfalfa pellets. PLEASE for your pigs health and safety, soak your alfalfa before feeding. If you feed the pigs alfalfa pellets dry they expand inside the stomach which can cause bloat or dehydration. Hard pellets are also a choking hazard for smaller pigs. We feed between 8-12 oz (one to one and a half cups) of soaked alfalfa twice a day, more in the winter when there is less grass. During the winter, kunekune naturally drink less, so the alfalfa helps keep them hydrated. We place our alfalfa in a bucket and cover it with warm water to soak for about 10 minutes while we get the rest of the feed together. It should be soft and loose when you feed it. Alfalfa isn’t essential, but it is helpful if you don’t have as much pasture or quality of pasture that you would like. The alfalfa is usually the last thing the pigs eat in the dinner trough, they will always eat the calorie dense foods first. Alfalfa provides calcium



and other vitamins, but don't over feed alfalfa because too much calcium can cause urinary issues in pigs.

We also feed black oil sunflower seeds (BOSS) once a day. BOSS also isn't essential but it's a good addition to your feed. BOSS is a supplement for healthy skin and hair, especially during the summer when pigs skin is dry and they are blowing their coat.

Kunekunes need supplemental feed. Can you keep a kune alive on pasture/forage alone? Yes, and it may grow and keep full. But the pigs will not be as healthy as they can be. As little as a cup of pellet feed a day can improve their dietary intake. Kunekunes need to graze! But grazing alone isn't enough.

Corn is another controversial feed. Corn is not a vegetable, it's a starch. Meat pigs are often finished on corn because it flushes the system and packs on some fat. But kunekunes are a slow growing lard breed. It's very easy for them to convert starch to fat. So corn, if ever fed, should make up no more than 10% of their diet. They may gain weight but it will be fat weight. Kunekunes with a lot of fat are not as healthy, have more issues conceiving, and have a reduced meat yield. IF you feed corn or oats, make sure it's cracked corn or rolled oats. Whole corn or oats usually come out in the same condition they go in.

Other healthy options for kunekunes- hay, fruits, veggies, eggs, or milk. Our pigs always have access to hay. We get our hay locally, it's a coastal Bermuda blend. The pigs love it and it's a good substitute when the grass dies back in the winter. Fruits and veggies are always a win with the pigs! Occasionally we will get surplus veggies from the food bank or local farms. Avoid anything with a pit, like peaches or avocado. And don't feed raw white potatoes but they are safe if they are cooked. After pumpkin patches close, we try to stock up on pumpkins that can last for months! If you have eggs that are getting old, the pigs appreciate them! You can feed them raw, but we don't because I don't want the pigs to get the idea that raw eggs are for them and try to get into the chicken coop. We boil our eggs and crack the shells but leave the shells on. If you have extra milk, from a goat or cow, even adult pigs love it!

WATER

Did you know pigs can't sweat? True! It is very important for pigs to have fresh clean drinking water as well as a wallow. Pigs wallow in the mud to stay cool, prevent sunburn, and as protection from biting insects. We wash and refill water dishes at least twice a day, usually a lot more often during the summer! There are a lot of options for waterers—kiddie pools, sand boxes, cement pans. Kiddie pools are the cheapest, but the sides get crushed and they get holes easily. You can sometimes find used sandboxes on Craigslist or Marketplace. We have built wooden frames around the cement tubs, it's not cheap but they are basically indestructible—even in the boar pen!



WORMER

Pigs' noses are on the ground 99 percent of time when they aren't asleep; they explore everything with their mouths. Worming is essential to healthy livestock. Over-worming and inadequate worming can lead to resistant worms, just like improper use of antibiotics can create superbugs. We recommend rotating wormers to avoid resistance. Piglets are wormed twice, 10-14 days apart with Ivomec before leaving the farm. We worm our herd three or four times a year, depending on soil condition. Talk to your vet for local recommendations. The dosages listed below are to be used if the medication is given orally. We like to sneak their wormer into a snack cake. If you are injecting the wormer, dose by the manufacturers instructions.



Ivermectin/Ivomec dosage: 0.2cc for every 10lbs

weight	dose
5lbs	0.1cc
10lbs	0.2cc
15lbs	0.3cc
20lbs	0.4cc
50lbs	1cc
75lbs	1.5cc
100lbs	2cc
125lbs	2.5cc
150lbs	3cc
175lbs	3.5cc
200lbs	4cc

This medication needs to be given once, you can give it orally and then again in 10-14 days. Recommendation is to do this every 6 months.



Safe-guard/fenbendazole dosage: 0.1cc for every 10 lbs

weight	dose
5lbs	0.05cc
10lbs	0.1cc
15lbs	0.15cc
20lbs	0.2cc
50lbs	0.5cc
75lbs	0.75cc
100lbs	1cc
125lbs	1.25cc
150lbs	1.5cc
175lbs	1.75cc
200lbs	2cc

This dose should be given once a day for three days in a row. If worms are suspected, repeat the 3 day dosing two weeks after the first dosing. Regular schedule for Fenbendazole is every 4-6 months

VACCINATIONS

Piglets are vaccinated with ResipSure1 and FarrowSure before leaving the farm. Pigs in different regions may be exposed to different risks. Please consult your vet for local recommendations. ResipSure1 vaccinates against mycoplasmal pneumonia. FarrowSure helps in preventing reproductive failure caused by porcine parvovirus (PPV); erysipelas caused by *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*; and leptospirosis caused by *Leptospira canicola*, *L. grippityphosa*, *L. hardjo*, *L. icterohaemorrhagiae* and *L. pomona*.

An invaluable tool we have found for injections is the Slap Shot and a Prima Vaccinator. These can be found at Valley Vet or most livestock supply websites.



SHELTERS

With sufficient water and shelter, kunekunes can acclimate to just about any climate. They are found thriving from Arizona to Alaska. Shelters don't have to be fancy. You can usually construct shelters from materials you have available to you. They only need to stay dry and draft free. During the winter, load shelters with hay and they will burrow down together in a piggy pile to keep warm!

When you start planning for a farrowing pen, you will need to make sure your plan includes a creep and crush rails, as well as a heat lamp. Your farrowing pen is a safe, secure location for your sow to deliver and raise her piglets. It's worth your investment to create the best space possible. Here are some examples of some shelters as well as a panoramic of our two stall farrowing area.



FINAL ADVICE

Enjoy your kunekunes! We are biased but they are the best breed ever!

Whether this is your first kunekune or your twentieth, never stop learning. Every pig, every litter, every new breeder I meet, I try to learn something! The kunekune community is small but most breeders are working from a complete love for the breed. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience out there.

When you take home a Liberty kunekune, you get a lifetime subscription to me! If it is an emergency, please contact your local veterinarian, I can not replace the knowledge and information they can provide. But we will always make a point to be available to answer questions. If you have questions, concerns, or problems—contact me!