

Great Pigs for Small Scale Farming Operations

Written by:

Kathy Petersen, President of AKKPS

What makes KuneKunes so special? :

- They are a rare, multi- purpose pig
- They are a true grazing pig
- Friendly, docile demeanor
- Easy to handle for first time owners
- Low maintenance
- Do not get aggressive
- Do not tend to root like other breeds
- Do not test fencing like other breeds
- Have a short upturned snout for grazing
- Can fatten on grazing alone
- Extremely easy to train due to great intelligence, 4th smartest animal on the planet

Size: - KuneKunes are a small to mid size pig weighing 100-250 pounds (boars may be slightly more in weight) and 24 -36 inches tall. This is usually about to your knee. (Of course, this can vary depending on how much you feed them.) KuneKune means "fat and round" in the Maori language and that is exactly what they are!

Breed Characteristic: KuneKunes have a very distinct characteristic: they have wattles or "piri piri's" under their jowls. Some are born with wattles and some without but, for breeding purposes, wattles are usually preferred as that is the breed standard. Homesteaders are usually able to take advantage of discounted pricing from some breeders, in unwattled stock for pork production.

The inheritance of these wattles appears to have no rhyme or reason! You can mate two double wattled Kunes and get both double wattled and unwattled offspring. You can mate two unwattled Kunes together and get double wattled animals.

Temperament: - Kunes are very docile, affectionate and easy little pigs. When you rub a KuneKunes side, they will flop over for a belly rub. They are fantastic with chickens, ducks, goats, cats and dogs. Children are delighted to hear them "speak" to you" during feeding time. This is a breed that children can be trusted with! Even a full, intact breeding boar can be a child's best friend. When mothers are farrowing and raising their young, they do not usually get aggressive or mind children interacting with their young. It is a wonderful experience for children watching mother's farrow their offspring.

Feeding - Kunes primarily graze "for a living". You can totally feed your KuneKune on pasture if you have a nice rich pasture year round. If you do not, you may need to supplement in the winter with Alfalfa hay and/ or alfalfa pellets and a mini pig pellet food such as Mazuri pig, Blue Seal Pig & Sow or Purina Complete Pig and Sow food. The feed can be found at your local feed and seed store or a local Tractor Supply. This breed requires a lower protein level of about 16%.

Of course pigs enjoy the excess fruits and vegetables from the garden as well all year round. They will be happy to clean out a garden that is finished for the year or clean up an orchard from the fruit that may be falling. That is a helpful task these pigs are delighted to assist you with. If you do fodder (hydroponic barley or wheat) for other livestock, the KuneKunes will also enjoy a nice daily feeding of that.

Housing: Housing for KuneKunes can be as simple or complex as you desire. I have seen pig houses built out of the pallets with a small "porch" area to keep them out of the sun. In the winter an old blanket or rug makes a nice cover to keep the KuneKunes draft free. It works very well and makes a sturdy house. You can purchase the livestock huts made from plastic or even steel. You can use a barn or shed area as well. The main thing is keeping the area free of draft and dry. You can use wheat hay, grass hay or straw for nice bedding. KuneKunes will barrow in the hay to stay warm and they tend to cuddle together to share their heat from their bodies with each other.

Climates: KuneKunes are a very hardy little pig doing well in most climates. However, pigs cannot sweat and getting in the water is the only way for them to cool down. They also wallow in a "pig made" mud puddle to keep cool, protect their skin from sunburn and keep off insects. If you have a special area that you would like your mud puddle, I would strongly suggest you dig it out for them or they will do it themselves with spilling their water dishes to soften the ground so they can root it out for you. You can also purchase several kiddie swimming pools, purchased at most Kmart's and Wal-Mart's for a small fee for your pigs to cool off in the heat.

The snow does not seem to matter much to KuneKunes as they will be out foraging around even while it is snowing.

Investment and Marketability: With the increase of grain prices, many farmers are struggling, if not have given up on raising livestock altogether. Why is this breed different? This breed is a cost effective breed as their primary food is grazing. As the prices go up, pork is going to more and more difficult to find or will be much more expensive. The impact of the PEDv virus is showing a decrease in pigs making it to the market and therefore will affect the pork prices over the next year or so. The time to get into kunes is NOW before that happens. You can raise them as meat pigs and have a good, valuable source of pork to offer your own family, family members, friends and buyers.

If you cannot imagine raising pigs for meat, you can raise breeding stock for other farms that are interested in growing their own meat or selling meat to the public. There are upper scale restaurants and chefs in California that are serving and promoting KuneKunes meat and it is only a matter of time before that trend heads across the US.

With any livestock farming venture, getting into KuneKunes will require an investment and dedication. It is an investment for the future! If you are just starting out or thinking of diversifying your farming operation, consider this delightful breed.

Virginia KuneKunes