

This (not so little) piggy went wee, wee, wee to her new home

Sanctuary One rescues Lisa, a 700-pound Yorkshire swine



Lisa, a 700-pound Yorkshire pig rescued from an abusive farmer in Bellingham, Wash., has found a home with Sansa Collins at Sanctuary One at Double Oak Farm in the Applegate Valley. Photo by Bob Pennell.

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By Sanne Specht
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For one rescued Yorkshire swine, the road to pig heaven is paved with kind souls who offer her peanuts, bananas and belly rubs.

One-year-old Lisa shuffles out of the barn's shadows and into the sunlight, mincing along on ridiculously dainty trotters. Like a drifting big pink-and-white cloud, the 700-plus pound piggy heads toward Sansa Collins, resident manager at Sanctuary One, a nonprofit animal sanctuary on 55 acres at Double Oak Farm in the Applegate Valley.

"She's all about the belly rubs," says Collins, as she hunkers down alongside Lisa. "Her belly is so soft."

The big pig flops over onto her side to better present her tummy. Collins laughs as Lisa wiggles her snout, squints her eyes and heaves a contented porcine sigh.

"That is a happy pig face," says Collins.

Sanctuary One's newest resident arrived about a week ago. Animal welfare officials in Washington rescued the wayward porker in January from a frustrated farmer who was seen whacking her with a 2-by-4, says Laura Clark, executive director of the Whatcom Humane Society in Bellingham, Wash.

It seems lonely Lisa had once again broken out of her enclosure and gone down the road to visit some nearby horses. The farmer surrendered the pig on the spot, says Clark.

"He basically washed his hands of her," she says, adding it took seven employees and six hours to load Lisa into the decrepit horse trailer and get her to safety.

Once the pig was in protective custody in a pen at the Humane Society, Clark began reaching out to local farm rescue organizations.

"We were looking for someone who would care for her with compassion," says Clark. "We did not want her to end up on a dinner plate."

Lisa quickly learned her name, and would come when she was called. Unless she didn't want to, says Clark.

"I fell in love with her at first sight," says Clark. "We learned quickly how intelligent she is. And she learned quickly how to manipulate us. She'll follow you like a dog. And she'll do just about anything for a peanut or a banana. But when she wants to go somewhere, you won't stop her."

After Lisa continued to demonstrate her abilities as an escape artist at the shelter, Clark's husband built a pig-appropriate enclosure on a half acre behind their home.

"And she's a sweet, social pig," says Clark. "But she was so lonely at my house. I work all day and she needs to be with friends — two-legged ones and four-legged ones."

Clark kept looking. But the weeks turned into months and still there was no proper home for Lisa.

"We looked from Idaho to Montana and down to Oregon," says Clark. "When Sansa wrote me and said, 'We'll take her,' I literally started to cry."

Lisa made the trip to the Applegate last Monday, riding in a first-rate stock trailer and accompanied by a team of seven humane society volunteers.

"It's kind of a long drive and she's kind of a big pig," says Clark. "But she loaded like a champ and Team Rehome Lisa drove all night."

Lisa is fitting right in with the herds of rescued horses, goats, geese and other animals. She will be part of the organization's ongoing educational programs. Contrary to popular opinion, pigs are highly intelligent and actually very clean in their habits — aside from their affinity for mud, Collins says.

"I'm going to teach her to fetch and do tricks," she says. "And we're going to make her a mud hole to wallow in."

Sanctuary One already has a rescued pot-bellied pig in residence. But Rosie is Lilliputian compared to the 7-foot-long swine. Collins says the non-profit would appreciate donations to help accommodate Lisa's ample appetite. She eats several scoops of pig chow mixed with loads of apples, bananas and other fresh produce daily, Collins says.

"She's just gonna live out her happy little life here getting her belly rubs and eating peanut butter sandwiches," says Collins.

To help Sanctuary One, call 541-899-8627 or visit www.sanctuaryone.org.

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