

Rare Pigs Debut at Disney's Animal Kingdom

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Dec. 13, 2011 – The Animal Care team at Conservation Station has some new animals to brag about with the arrival of three kunekune pigs, a rare breed that has just made its debut at Disney's Animal Kingdom.

Found in New Zealand but believed to have originated in China, kunekune pigs also are known as Maori pigs after the first people of New Zealand. "Kunekune" means "plump" in the Maori language. Kunekunes nearly became extinct in the 1980s before breeding efforts increased their numbers.

To help with the pigs' care at Disney's Animal Kingdom and to acclimate them to the up-close experience with Guests at Affection Section, animal keepers have been working with the kunekune pigs on a variety of behaviors. This training, which is similar to techniques used with pets, helps keep the pigs fit, intellectually stimulated and comfortable around Guests.

"Most people have heard about endangered species in reference to wild animals, but many domestic animals are at risk of extinction as well," said Jackie Ogden, Ph.D., vice president of Animals, Science and Environment for Disney Parks. "By showcasing rare domestic breeds, like babydoll sheep, Nigerian dwarf goats and kunekune pigs at Affection Section, we are helping our Guests learn more about them and how they can help."

Fun facts about kunekune pigs:

- Kunekunes are a small breed that usually weighs from 90-120 pounds when fully grown. They have a round body, a short up-turned snout and a curly tail. Some have a wattle (a fleshy growth hanging from the neck).
- The pigs can be black, white, ginger (red), brown or gold tipped, and their coats can be spotted, striped, marbled, solid, curly, smooth, rough, long or short.
- They are grazers and foragers. They eat shrubs, weeds, bird eggs, snakes and mice, and usually don't root.