

# MUSCOOT MONTHLY

Written by: Faith McCauley and Jen Campbell



## THE THREE LITTLE PIGS GET TRAINED

If you have ever come to Muscoot Farm around feeding time or if you happen to follow our Instagram, you may have gotten a glimpse of me training our pigs. I have been consistently working with our three pot-bellied pigs Moe, Curly, and Larry to establish good habits. Similar to dogs and other animals, pigs can be trained by rewarding good behaviors and deterring bad ones. Clickers are commonly used to reward good behavior and is a tool that I've incorporated into our pig training. To create a relationship with this tool the clicker must be primed. This means having the pigs associate the clicking noise with positive reinforcement (such as a treat). I like to use celery as their training treats because they are very low calorie and the pigs enjoy it.

The first behavior we wanted to instill was understanding boundaries during feeding time. Initially, we would put their food bowls behind us and

then hold large plastic sorting boards to create space between ourselves and the pigs. While doing this we would say the word "Space" loud and clear. We would not move the board until they took a step back and paused, exhibiting that they understood what we wanted. Once they did this, we would allow them to eat and provide positive reinforcements such as saying "good boy" and petting them. At a certain point the sorting boards were no longer needed, and then the clicker was introduced. The clicker is supposed to only be used once the behavior or trick is completed. For example, once the pigs give us space, we immediately click the clicker and allow them access to their food.

In addition to "space", I've also been teaching them how to spin and sit, but the possibilities of what they can learn are endless. The great thing about clicker training is that the more established these commands become, the easier it is to create new commands. Working with the pigs not

only teaches better behavior, but it also strengthens the bond we share with them. Additionally, it provides enrichment and mental stimulation for them. Ultimately, it's a win-win and I cannot wait to see what our smart boys are capable of learning. - Faith McCauley, Farm Staff member

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## ANIMAL BIRTHDAYS TO CELEBRATE IN MARCH!

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March is a month of celebration here at the farm, and we've got five beloved animals with birthdays coming up that we're excited to share!

First up is an exciting one! Showgirl the Holstein cow will be celebrating a big birthday on March 10 - she's turning 16! Showgirl's gentle spirit and nurturing personality have made her an irreplaceable part of the farm, and her milestone birthday is a wonderful reminder of the love and joy she brings to everyone around her.

Next is Phil, our goofy pygmy goat, who's turning 7 on March 11. With his adorable face and kind nature, Phil has won over the hearts of everyone who meets him, and we're looking forward to another year of his playful antics.

On March 21, Olive, our Alpine dairy goat, will be turning 4. Olive is always up for an adventure and

loves a little mischief, which is why she's such a fan favorite. We can't wait to celebrate another year with this energetic, spunky goat.

Then, on March 30, Louise, our gentle sheep, will turn 4. Louise is the calm and quiet type, with a peaceful presence that makes her a joy to be around. She loves to hang out with the herd and is a calming influence on the other animals. We're looking forward to celebrating this sweet soul.

On March 31, Vinny, our Alpine dairy goat, will be turning 7. With his handsome face and bold personality, Vinny always brings something special to the farm. A lot of people visit Muscoot just to see him, and we're excited to mark another year with this charming guy.

Join us in wishing a big happy birthday to all our wonderful animals this March!

- Jen Campbell, Educator



**Muscoot Farm is turning 50 this year!**  
Please consider making a donation towards The Friends of Muscoot Farm to contribute towards the care of our animals, historic preservation, and public programming as we celebrate this big year.

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