Critter Corner

“Newt & Rico”

By: Rachael Komulainen, Park Animal Keeper

Have you been to Hart Park recently?!? If so, you have probably seen our newest critter family members. And, if not, you need to come on over and give us a visit!

On August 7th, two new bundles of joy moved in. Last February, our senior, male, potbellied pig Leroy passed away. Leroy had been declining in health and his passing was expected. Afterwards, though, it left his sibling, Pixie, by herself. Ever since then, we have been on the lookout for the right rescue situation. Preferably, one where we could not only get one or two more potbellied pigs but also help out an animal rescue organization in the much-needed placement of rescued animals.

Recently, the perfect situation arose! In working with local pig rescue organizations, we were put in contact with a dog rescue organization that was helping to save some potbellied pigs on the streets of Puerto Rico. WUFAW, which stands for Women United For Animal Rescue, partnered with others in Puerto Rico to capture, neuter, vaccinate and deworm several male pigs. The timing was right, so we were the recipients of the first two pigs that got shipped over to California!

We drove down to Sherman Oaks to pick them up from their foster mom and brought them back here on August 7th. Initially, we watched the interaction between Pixie, our existing potbelly pig, and the piglets. She was curious and tolerant, for the most part. However, when one of them flopped down in her mudpuddle, she wasn’t having it! She let the little one know that she was the old lady of the house and it was all hers! Well, he was fast and she was slow, and it was a lesson learned for the new arrival. Since then, they have been doing great, even eating and sleeping alongside of Pixie.

So now, let me tell you a little about our boys. The first is the spotted one, whom we named “Pig Newton,” although his nickname is ‘Newt.’ He is very playful, curious, loves the water and screams bloody murder when he is picked up! He is a true character and very smart – always trying to outsmart the staff to avoid capture and to steal Pixie’s food. The second is the all-black one, whom we named “Puerto Rico,” although his nickname is ‘Rico.’ Rico is the friendliest. He is a true love bug and is very food-oriented. He is quiet, relaxed, and tolerant – and even likes being held and cuddled. He does not, though, care for the mudpuddles. Already, each pig has definitely shown staff their unique personalities.

They came in to Hart Park at about 4 months of age, so they are still young enough to be taught to walk on harnesses, which is our goal. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, you will see our piglets on walks around the park, like our donkey and alpacas. So, please stop by for a visit to the Hart Park Barnyard and check out our new piggies, as well as all of the other awesome critters!