



LET'S TALK ABOUT  
**BISCUIT'S**  
BITING  
BEHAVIOUR

AN APH CARE GUIDE

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By Happy Quills

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# BITING BEHAVIOUR

Hi, my name is Biscuit and I'm here to give you some hints and tips on how to avoid biting and the reason why us hogs do it.

## Our sight

Our sight is poor, we rely scent and taste. If you are going to wiggle your fingers in front of our faces then we cannot be blamed for mistaking you for a big juicy wormie from time to time.

## Scent and Taste

Scent is something we rely on strongly to find our food, we have an enhanced smell sense. If your smell nice then we want to take a chomp or three, we don't want to be missing out on some new grub. We can smell food on your fingers several hours after you have eaten, best prevention is always to wash your hands with an unscented soap before handling us. We also like the salty taste of your sweat so even if you haven't been handling food it is good practise to wash your hands.

Usually if biting is based on scent we tend to lick first. As owners tend to think licking is "cute behaviour" they are often surprised when we suddenly lunge and chomp down. Although this behaviour is unacceptable to you, we are just displaying normal hog behaviour - having a little taste to check it's palatable and then going in for the kill. If we start licking you then this is a good time to remove your self from our near vicinity if you want to avoid being bitten.

We are often triggered by new scents such as hand cream, perfume, clothes detergent. If we are used to your scent then we may not recognise your new disguise, don't be surprised if we are more huffy, we don't like change.

It has also been noted that hogs are anti-smoking. The smell of tobacco makes them bite, even being in a smoky environment can make them temperamental.

## Inquisitive behaviour

In order to feel safe and settled we have a very inquisitive behaviour. We should be allowed to explore and to lick/ bite safe items so that we understand our surroundings. Biting is particularly common if we have been brought to a new home as we are unsettled and unfamiliar with our new surroundings. Give us time to explore in our new enclosure.

Baby hoglets are a bit like babies, they put everything to their mouths to learn about their habitat. Some common items that they can be fascinated with are bracelets, watches, rings, earrings and ear lobes, false nails and nail polish, socks and toes, nipples ( yes really !)

Some hogs like to have something in their mouths, like blanket or a soft toy, they may drag it everywhere with them in their enclosure. If you take away their security blanket then they will look for something else to fill their mouths - usually your fingers.

### Distress

Hogs will often act out if they are feeling pain or distress. As previously mentioned, we don't like change, we may bite as you have changed our bedding as we have just got it to our required stinkiness and we are disgruntled about this. We may bite as you are invading our personal space and it's just a little warning for you to back away - a precursor to this if you are very observant is that we release a puff of air from our noses ( not quite a huff) to let you know you are getting too close, watch out for this if we are cuddling into your neck, if you move your head too close we might give a little puff of annoyance to say that's close enough thank you.

We are sensitive souls, we do not like a noisy environment, so that might trigger us. We also get upset at the introduction of a new pet, such as a cat or dog, as we think we smell predators which makes us scared.

Even the nicest natured hog becomes grumpy and will bite if over handled when quilling. Imagine how sore you would feel with 3-5000 quills trying to pierce through your skin. You don't want to stop handling us at this point, as that in itself may distress us, but please do not try and stroke us. Instead put us on your lap so we can still smell and bond with you, let us explore our surrounding. We will soon be back to our old self once it stops hurting ( you can help with the pain by using Leucillin or giving us a nice oat bath)

When stroking us use a firm hand stroking in the direction of our quills. Soft strokes can feel like tickles to us and that can be quite annoying. Also let us see your hand before you attempt to stroke us, we do not like sudden surprises so that can cause us to bite.

Some hogs like a nice cosy environment, it's a bit like going on holiday, you instantly feel better when you feel the warmth on your skin. You might want to up your thermostat a couple of degrees to see if the warmth makes us be more pleasant.

Hogs are renowned for being able to hide pain. Often owners will not realise their hogs have been suffering ailments until it is too late. A good indication that your hog may be ill is a sudden change in temperament, especially biting you or self harming to themselves. Just because you cannot see anything wrong doesn't mean there isn't.

### Over handling

Hogs can get distressed when over handled. It is best to build up the time you handle them slowly. Start out 5-10 mins and increase gradually until they are comfortable being in your presence for long periods of time. Hogs will usually let you know if they have had enough by trying to squirm away. If extremely stressed they will have green poo, a clear indicator to put them back in their enclosure.

### Territorial

Quite simply this enclosure is mine, get out. You stick your hand in my space to clean up, then sorry but you are fair game. Sometimes it is better to remove me from my enclosure when you are cleaning so that I do not become stressed and aggressive.

### Communication:

Hogs bite to communicate, as they have limited verbal skills.

They can bite out of pain, frustration, irritation, jealousy and quite frankly just because they enjoy it as it lets them get their own way.

Hogs can bite out of jealousy if they can smell another hog on you. Remember they are solitary creatures, so we want to be number one. How dare you cuddle someone else first !

Hogs are also quick to catch on, if we bite you and then you suddenly put us back in our enclosure then we quickly learn that if we want to go back home we just need to bite you. Try to avoid putting your hog back in its enclosure as soon as they have bitten you to prevent this behaviour from formulating.

Have you ever seen hogs mate ? Well the males bite down on the female whilst mating. Sometimes your hog will be lying there all plotted out and relaxed and then next minute they are chomping down, no reason whatsoever. Could we possibly be claiming you as ours ? It's certainly an interesting theory. A friend of mine, Bramble, liked to do this to his Mummy when cuddling into her neck. She tried not wearing perfume, didn't help, she tried wearing high necked tops, didn't stop, Bramble was perfectly relaxed and happily clicking and then chomp! Bramble's Mummy stopped this behaviour by changing the way she held him. Instead of letting him lie on her neck, she started cradling him in the crook of her arm. As long as Bramble had his little wet nose touching her skin he was happy, no more biting. In this case biting was stopped as his Mummy had created a new behaviour instead. It is possible to teach hogs not to bite through time and perseverance ( and maybe a few finger chomps too many).

**In short get to know your hogs behaviour. If you watch closely enough you will start to notice the signs of building up to biting and can prevent this from happening. Never shout at your hogs, this will only scare them and break your bond.**