Meet Tiny and Albee. They were both born with very fixable hernias. But when you're a Yorkshire pig born into the food industry... surgery isn't in the cards for you. These two brothers were literally tossed aside to die. Luckily, our network of rescuers heard about it and jumped into action!

That picture is from 2019, when they arrived. Each of these big boys now weighs in at about 500 lbs! Now, the brothers live in their spotless barn stall, with access to a large yard. They spend their evenings cuddling with their other porcine pals in their soft, warm, beds. But as soon as the sun's up, it's noses down! The crew heads out to root around in their pasture like it's their job. Which, it kind of is—they're doing what comes naturally, and what make them happy. That's all we ask. Like most pigs, Tiny and Albee love hanging with their people. When our farm manager calls, they come running like dogs to see their fave friend. We hope the past is just a memory for Tiny and Albee.

You've probably heard that pigs are filthy animals. Not so: like our house pets, pigs don’t “go” where they sleep. In fact, they usually pick one “litterbox” area and keep the rest of their homes clean. Outside, Tiny and Albee take great joy in rooting around in the ground and digging up good smells. This is a natural, calming behavior all pigs enjoy. Add some water—and it's a mud wallow. Pigs soak in the mud, rolling around joyfully. This, again, is not because they are dirty, but because they cannot sweat. Pigs have no way to bring down their internal temperature. Some pigs can also get sunburned and mud acts like nature’s sunscreen. Pretty smart, eh?

Studies have shown that Tiny and Albee, and their pig friends, are smarter than the average three-year-old child. They can recognize themselves in a mirror. Most amazingly, in one test, pigs learned how to move a cursor on a computer screen even faster than chimpanzees did. They're smarter than cats and dogs, by far, and just as eager for love. So why don't we think of these animals as “too smart” to be a source of food, like chimps, elephants, or dolphins?
Tiny and Albee were born to a mother who spent her life in a gestation crate, a two-foot-wide cage, too small for her to even turn around. She had been there since she was about 5 months old, and was impregnated to produce litter after litter. Research has shown that "breeding sows" experience extreme distress and depression from this hopeless cycle. By about 3-5 years old, she would have been too exhausted to have any more babies, and would have been killed. At any time, there are about 6 million pigs living in gestation crates in the USA.

Upon her litter being born, mom was moved to a “farrowing crate” which was just large enough for her to lie on her side so her piglets could nurse through metal bars. After 10 days, she was inseminated again and moved back to her gestation crate. The piglets were separated as breeders or meat pigs. Tiny and Albee would have been moved to a factory farm for meat. They would have had sections of their ears removed, been castrated, had their teeth cut, and their tail cut off to prevent tail biting—an unnatural and aggressive behavior resulting from the stress of a dark, crowded factory farm. There would be no anesthetic or pain relief.

Factory farms crowd pigs into indoor housing units. Slatted metal floors allow wastes to pass under the floor, where it is pumped out. Still, the floor where pigs live is layered with feces, urine, vomit, and worse: Crowded conditions mean that those who cannot survive may be left to decay under the feet of those that do. In this terrifying environment pigs become aggressive.

Albee and Tiny are nothing more than products to profit from to the food industry. Their medical condition meant they were considered expenses, and as such, the newborn piglets were tossed atop a pile of dead pigs, left to die on their own. This attitude doesn’t end with newborns. As industrial pigs only get to live six months, a pig suffering from illness or injury whose treatment would cost more than the price of the pig is euthanized. Otherwise, pigs just suffer through recurrent pneumonia, mange, bites, and skin and eye infections. It is difficult to track the incidence of more serious illnesses since these aren’t always reported. However, as seen during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, when a strange contagion sweeps over a pig population, farmers may opt to use “ventilation shutdown”, or VSD, to euthanize an entire herd at once. This involves locking the herd inside the shed, and shutting off the ventilation system. Without it, the intense heat and toxic air suffocates the pigs over several long hours. The American Veterinary Medical Association currently classifies VSD as “permitted in constrained circumstances.” In 2020, a group of vets petitioned the House of Delegates to reclassify this process as “not recommended.” But they refused to even discuss this small mercy.

Surviving pigs are transported to slaughterhouses that may be several states away. Electric prods force the frightened pigs to move faster. Once there, pigs may be rendered unconscious by having carbon dioxide pumped in. It’s painful and pigs fight it until they pass out. This is the latest “humane” method, provided their throats are slit within 15 seconds, before they regain consciousness. The truth is, there are about 40 pigs killed every second around the world. There is no way to kill them painlessly, or humanely.
Knowing that pigs are smarter than our pets and just as lovable, it is impossible to deny how unbearable their lives must be—if you are brave enough to do so. These clean, tender animals spend their lives in filth and fear, with no chance to engage in natural practices like rooting, wallowing, and nesting: pregnant pigs would build nests in which to give birth as their time nears. They sing to their babies while they nurse. At a factory farm, mothers are permitted to nurse for less than a month. Then, her pigs are taken to be fattened up, and she is returned to her gestation crate and impregnated again. Industrial pigs have only metal, fear, and disease as their companions.

In fact, zoonotic diseases, or illnesses that travel between species, are pretty common in factory-farmed pigs. From simple things like ringworm, to more complicated and illnesses like aspergillosis, a fungal infection that can be deadly to asthmatics. In 2009, over 60 million people contracted a new “swine flu” virus. Bacteria in edible products made from pigs include salmonella, e-coli, staph, and listeria, among others. In 2012, a study found that 69% of all pig products tested contained Y. enterocolitica, a gram negative strain of bacteria. Pigs don’t like to be dirty; factory farming, however, is a hotbed of unclean sickness. Some pig products (bacon) have long been classified as a class 1 carcinogen—the same class as cigarettes.

Another casualty of the industry is the farmers and workers themselves. One study showed that 70% of all workers in pig confinement operations had one or more respiratory illness from inhaling the lethal combination of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and other chemicals. Chronic lung problems, such as asthma, are not uncommon. They are not paid well and work long hours. Union advocate Greg Denier once described the workers’ demands as “just bargaining for human decency.” Neither people nor pigs in the industry are afforded any such courtesy.

Working in an industry that profits off cruelty takes a toll on mental health, too. Workers must clip teeth, cut tails and ears, and castrate males, all without pain relief. It’s also someone’s job to kill these sweet, personable, sentient beings day in and day out. Most people could not live with that; yet they can turn a blind eye toward the truth that someone is doing it for them. Slaughterhouse workers suffer from a unique form of PTSD called PITS, caused by taking part in creating traumatic experiences. Addiction and violent crime rates are much higher in communities where slaughterhouses are the main employers. Pig farms and slaughterhouses are located in low-income communities, and workers must often choose between a living, and their lives.

When pig confinement sheds are cleaned, the waste is pumped into huge, open lagoons that leak into rivers and groundwater or flood during storms. Workers have actually drowned in these manure pits. Any leaks or spills are deadly to wildlife and make people sick when it gets into the drinking water. Full lagoons get sprayed onto nearby farms. People for miles can’t go outside. The constant odor causes nausea, and the toxins cause asthma or worse.

You can end this cycle of abuse for exploited pigs and people. Stop eating pigs. Let your wallet speak for those who cannot. A visit to Tiny and Albee will show you that it’s worth it.

Call them from across the field and watch their little ears flap with excitement as they bound over. With a little tickle, either pig will roll on to his side for a belly rub. Like dogs, no pig can resist them.