Floppy is a one-of-a-kind pig! He was born in the middle of the night on January 18, 2020 as part of a litter of nine that were intended to be raised as show pigs for local FFA and 4-H kids. Right away, it was noticed that something was not right because Floppy’s head shook non-stop. The vet was called and videos of his shaking head were sent to sanctuaries for professional opinions. Floppy was diagnosed with Shaking Head Syndrome (believed to be congenital tremors) and it was the worst case they had seen. After being diagnosed, the vet recommended the piglet be euthanized. His disability did not allow Floppy to hold his head still long enough to nurse or even walk, which increased his chances of mortality greatly due to malnourishment. The mortality rate for pigs with this condition is close to 30 percent. The vet only anticipated him to live for a few days before dying from starvation. He would never be able to survive or thrive as most pigs do.

The thought of euthanizing this piglet was heartbreaking; however, the farm he was born on was unable to give him the time and attention needed. My husband, Welsey, could not stand the thought of not giving him a chance at life so he rushed to the farm to pick him up. We took Floppy in with the intention to bottle-feed him and give him the best life we could, even if it was only for a short time. We created a small space in our basement with a heat lamp, some fuzzy blankets, and stuffed animals for companionship. The next two months were long and trying. We bottle-fed Floppy every three hours with milk replacer and spent every night handling him to give proper socialization.

As weeks went on, Floppy seemed to have less shaking. He was able to hold his head up on his own and bottle-feeding gradually became easier. He was eating all the time, each week with eating more and more, growing bigger and bigger. We never intended to keep the piglet; we simply wanted to help him through a critical point of his life and give him a fighting chance. He was only supposed to stay with us for a few weeks until he moved on to solid foods or until fate took over. However, as time went on, our bond grew stronger and Floppy stole our hearts. We couldn’t give him up!

We gave Floppy the royal treatment with his own room in our basement. That’s right, he is an indoor house pig currently weighing 200 pounds! Despite the opinion that Floppy would not go far, he is THRIVING. He is such a smart pig and continues to show his personality with every passing day. Floppy is potty trained, knows how to walk up and down stairs, loves grapes, and is allergic to blackberries. He also loves to play with his dog siblings. Transitioning to solid food was a challenge and he was about two weeks behind a normal pig. We discovered Floppy loves animal crackers and cat food, which made the switch much easier. It is now part of his daily diet along with pig pellets and other fruits. Although some may not agree with his diet, the vet has given him a clean bill of health and we stay committed to giving him the best life he could ever imagine.

Floppy’s disability is still improving but he is able to eat on his own to this day. Now, he only shakes when he is anxious or excited about something. You would never know his condition was so severe. Floppy has changed our lives in the best way. We never imagined having a spoiled pet pig, but now we couldn’t imagine life without him!

You can follow his journey on Instagram, by following @floppythepig

-Chelsey Weaning