

# Question: Am I an Arizona Pig?

How much do you know about our Arizona native peccaries? They are a spunky little bundle of energy that roams the deserts of Arizona, from as far north as Flagstaff to the south to the Mexican border. They are frequently found in communities around Phoenix such as Apache Junction, San Tan and Gilbert on the east side of the valley, Maricopa and Ahwatukee in the south, Buckeye and Waddell on the west side, and Fountain Hills, Anthem and Glendale on the north.



Is The Javelina Related to The Pig?

Is the Javelina related to the domestic pig? The answer is yes, but not closely. Scientific research suggests that the common ancestor of the Javelina and the domestic pig lived around 30 million years ago. This was during the Oligocene epoch when grasslands were spreading across continents.

The Javelina originally were found in South America, but over the years, have migrated north through Mexico and then into Arizona several centuries ago.

Full Grown Javelina Can Be Dangerous

Javelina, when full-grown, can be as heavy as 88 pounds and nearly 4 feet long. Their



babies are usually born between the months of November to March, but litters can be born year-round. They live in groups for protection from predators such as Coyotes and males have long canines that are dangerous and have been known to cause severe injuries to humans and dogs. Never corner a Javelina! Always have your dog on a leash if you are out in the desert and make plenty of noise to let them know you are around. If they are surprised or feel threatened, Javelina are known to attack. Be especially careful around water sources since these are common places where encounters can occur.

The Smell of Javelina

You can usually smell the Javelina before you see them. These “collared peccaries” (their official name) have scent glands on the base of their tails. They use the scent to mark their territory such as trees and bushes, also other Javelina in their group.

What Do Javelinas in Arizona Eat?

Javelinas love to eat fruits such as prickly pear and also roots and agave. They are also fond of many plants that people grow in their yards and so can be found occasionally foraging around homes near the desert regions. They are especially active foraging in the morning and evening times during the winter and mostly at night during the hot summer months. Javelina typically uses the hot times of the day to have a siesta in the shade of a tree, bush or rock outcropping.

For safety's sake, do not feed Javelina! Never put out food for these wild animals. Take your dog's water and food bowls in at night. Consider putting fences around your yard to protect your plants and keep the Javelina away from them.

### Encountering a Javelina in AZ - What to Do

You might come face to face with a Javelina in the wild or your neighborhood. Some advice from Arizona game and fish includes making loud noises, spraying them with water from your hose, and if away from home in the desert, carry a squirt gun with diluted ammonia (1 part ammonia to 9 parts water). The odor will discourage the Javelina since they have a keen sense of smell. Just avoid squirting them in their eyes since that can cause damage.



If Javelina are in an area and acting aggressively, please contact your local Arizona Game and Fish office. Their website is <https://www.azgfd.com/agency/offices/>. If it is after hours or a weekend, they can be reached at 623-236-7201.

**So, is the Javelina a pig? The answer, no, it is a peccary!**