



Pig Hoof & Tusk Care Guide

Proper hoof and tusk maintenance is essential for your pig's comfort, mobility, and overall health. Neglecting these areas can lead to infections, lameness, and injury to the pig or humans.



Important Safety Note

Tusk trimming is a high-risk procedure. If not done correctly, you can cause severe pain, dental infections, or injury to yourself. **It is highly recommended to have a veterinarian or a professional farrier perform the first tusk trim** to show you the proper technique.



Hoof Trimming

When to Trim

- **Frequency:** Generally every **6 to 12 months**.
- **Signs they need a trim:**
 - The hooves are curling upward or inward.
 - The pig is walking on their heels ("back on their pasterns").
 - Uneven wear causing the pig to limp.
 - Cracks or splits in the hoof wall.

Tools Needed

- **Hoof nippers** (goat or pig size).
- **Rasp or Dremel tool** (with sanding drum) for smoothing.
- **Restraint method** (Two people, or a "pig cradle").

The "How-To" Process

1. **Restrain:** The easiest method is to get the pig to lay on its side with a belly rub, or gently flip them onto their back (similar to a turtle).
 2. **Clean:** Remove mud and debris from the hooves to see the structure clearly.
 3. **Trim:** Using the nippers, take small amounts off the tip of the hoof at a time. The goal is to make the hoof flat on the bottom, mirroring the ground surface.
 4. **Avoid the "Quick":** Just like dog nails, pig hooves have a sensitive, blood-filled vein inside called the "quick." If you see a small pink dot in the center of the hoof horn while trimming, **STOP**. Trimming into the quick causes pain and bleeding.
 5. **Smooth:** Use a rasp or Dremel to smooth jagged edges.
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Tusk Trimming

When to Trim

- **Who needs it:** All pigs have tusks. They grow continuously.
 - **Boars (intact males):** Require frequent trimming (every 6–12 months).
 - **Barrows (neutered males):** Need occasional trimming (every 1–2 years).
 - **Sows (females):** Rarely need trimming unless they grow into their cheeks.
- **Signs they need a trim:**
 - Tusks are sharp or catching on clothing/fencing.
 - Tusks are curving toward the lips or face.

Tools Needed

- **Gigli wire saw** (surgical wire saw) with handles.
- **Veterinary sedative** (usually recommended for safety, though some experienced owners do it without).
- **Restraint:** Secure restraint is mandatory to prevent the pig from inhaling the cut piece of tusk.

The "How-To" Process

1. **Restrain:** The pig must be completely immobile (usually lying on its side) to prevent injury.
2. **Position:** Place the Gigli wire around the tusk, close to the gum line, but **leave at least 1/2 inch of tusk** protruding to avoid damaging the jawbone.
3. **Cut:** Using a sawing motion, cut through the tusk. **The wire will get very hot.** Stop frequently to let it cool, or you may burn the pig's mouth.
4. **Finish:** Smooth the sharp edge with a file or Dremel.

What to Check (Daily/Weekly Inspection)

Area	What to Look For
Hoof Wall	Cracks, splits, or uneven growth.
Sole/Pad	Abscesses (swelling), foreign objects (rocks/thorns), or foul odor (sign of infection).
Dewclaws	Overgrowth or catching on surfaces.
Tusks	Growth directing toward the skin, sharpness, or damage to the tusk itself.
Mobility	Lameness, reluctance to walk, or walking on ankles.

When to Call a Vet

- The pig is lame or limping heavily.
- You have cut into the quick and bleeding will not stop.
- There is a foul smell or pus coming from the hoof.
- The tusk is broken, infected, or severely overgrown into the face.