

Tusks

Female pigs do not really have a tusk. They have canine teeth which in the males continue to grow and become tusks. Also if done properly and at an early age (very close to when the adult canine tooth starts to erupt-around 8-10 months of age), male tusk removal is safe, not too hard and does not cause any damage to the jaw. In some cases, the canine teeth/tusks help keep the tongue in place and in some cases, when a canine tooth is missing, the tongue may protrude to that side. Properly removing a tusk in later ages is difficult because the tooth has a very long and deep root that is very strongly attached to the jaw bone. We do not recommend to routinely remove the tusks unless the tooth root is infected and abscessed and then it needs to be done surgically with proper tools and anesthesia. So, in most adult male pigs, it is best to just cut the tusks every year or so once they are over 2-3 years of age. Some owners think it's "manly" for their male pig to have protruding tusks. However, their tusks can get caught on chain-link fences, etc, or cut your leg if your pig side-swipes your leg, so it is best to get the tusks trimmed on a regular basis. NEVER let anyone trim the tusks if the pig is awake and screaming. He can accidentally inhale the tusk. Tusk trimming is best done by your vet or someone experienced doing this. As with hoof trimming, anesthesia is not generally necessary for routine tusk trimming and it should be performed by an experienced trimmer. Teeth cleaning is desirable for possibly preventing decay, but generally not essential.



Homer was a pig we rescued because he was being neglected by his former owners. His tusks had grown so long that they curved inward and punctured the sides of his cheeks, creating holes in his cheeks which were badly infected

Vaccinations

Potbellied pigs are susceptible to several contagious diseases. Even if you and your pig are never around other pigs, you should have your pig vaccinated every 12 months or so. A good time to have your pig vaccinated is at the same time his/her hooves & tusks are trimmed which is also usually a good time to clean their eyes and ears and check their general appearance. Vaccines should include **Pleurogard 4** which covers hemophiles, pleuro pneumonia, rhinitis and erysipelas, along with **Respisure** which covers microplasma pneumonia. In addition, it is recommended to also vaccinate with **Erysipelothrix**, **Leptospirosis**, and **Bordetella**; first because of the risk to people and not wanting to create a situation where a pet pig will be "blamed" for infecting a person with something. The other is that pigs do not have to be exposed to other pigs to get these bacteria. These diseases can also come from contaminated soil, water and other animals including dogs and people. Most vets also include a dose of **Ivomec** along with the vaccinations to prevent worms and mange. There are **NO** rabies vaccines approved for pigs, so many vets will not give rabies shots to pigs. Pigs are resistant to rabies and are very unlikely to contract the rabies disease. If your zoning ordinance states that your pig must be vaccinated for rabies, we have copies of letters from vets stating this fact if you can't obtain a letter from your local vet. The city or county should then waive that ordinance. Lyme's vaccine is also not approved in pigs. Tetanus can be given on a yearly basis.

Skin Care

While it is not unusual for potbellied pigs to have somewhat dry skin, you may need to make a dietary change or give oral supplementation in order to help relieve an extremely dry skin condition or dull coat. The most beautiful coats and good skin conditions are on those pigs fed a large variety of vegetables daily, going light on the fruits, along with a nutritionally complete potbellied pig feed. Providing your pig with ground Flaxseed, Flaxseed Oil capsule or Vitamin E capsule daily is sure to help with dry skin. There are also many topical skin care products, shampoos and conditioners, but products made especially for pets that are not harsh but meant for dry sensitive skin is preferable. You probably don't want products that are too greasy, which will leave grease stains on fabrics, furniture, carpets, etc. Some pig owners favor Avon's "Skin So Soft", because it acts not only as a skin conditioner but also an insect repellent.