

Hedgehog Care Sheet

Basic Care

Life Expectancy:

A hedgehog's life expectancy is usually 4-6 years of age, although they can live up to 8 years old. They are weaned from the mother at 6-8 weeks old, at which point they can be placed into their new homes.

Food:

Staple food is hard cat food. First ingredient should include meat such as chicken. Hedgehogs are insectivores by nature, however domestic hedgehogs should be fed insects only as treats as they are extremely high in fat and could cause obesity.

Treats may be given in the form of live meal worms or crickets.

Do not feed kitten food, healthy weight, kidney support, etc. Do not feed freeze dried insects, or foreign fruit and vegetables unless you are educated on what can be given.

Habitat:

Enclosure should be large enough to contain a food dish, water bottle, hideout igloo (large), and a running wheel. You can use a glass aquarium, rabbit style cage, or a clear plastic storage container. Hedgehogs do not chew like rodents such as rats, mice, or hamsters, so you can house them in a plastic enclosure, no bars needed. The enclosure should include a lid, they are relentless climbers, and if they have got out before, they will again. It should be elevated off the ground on a table or bench to prevent coldness from coming through the bottom of their cage. Multi-level enclosures are not advised.

Bedding:

Pine or aspen bedding is the cheapest, smells good, and hedgehog approved. If the bedding has been kiln dried, even better. You may also use shredded paper, or care fresh.

DO NOT use cedar shavings, cedar causes respiratory failure in small animals, and respiratory issues in large animals.

Environment:

Put your hedgehog enclosure in an area where there is no direct sunlight, or cold drafts. Keep the enclosure off the ground to prevent cold transferring through the bottom. If you have a cold house, place a small space heater next to the cage, or if you're using glass, a heat lamp or reptile heating pad.

Veterinary Care:

Think of the type of veterinary care you would provide for a hamster, or a guinea pig. Hedgehogs do not need shots, they do not need to be spayed or neutered, and vets rarely know how to treat a hedgehog if it is taken in anyway. Common problems in hedgehogs can often be treated at home, and if there is a serious problem, usually there is no vet that can cure it being that they are so small, and there is such a small window of time to fix the problem before it is too late.

Hedgehog habits:

- Hedgehogs are nocturnal creatures, although they periodically wake up and crunch on food during the day as adults.
- If they taste something different, or weird, they produce a foam in their mouths, and stretch in an awkward position to slather the back of their quills with that foam. It is called annointing, and is commonly misunderstood by first time hedgehog owners.
- Hedgehogs sleep a lot, especially babies, however if you take them out to play, they usually make the most of it and explore their surroundings until you put them back into their hedgehog quarters. I've had a few hedgehogs slumber on my lap or my desk while they were out to play.