

# Hedgehog

It has been said that no other exotic animal has caught the attention of the public quite like hedgehogs have. Their spines, friendly and curious nature, as well as that ever-smiling expression have endeared them to millions of confessed hedgehog lovers around the globe. The interest in hedgehogs doesn't end there, though. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of breeders, the African hedgehog is now readily available and can be found in the homes of thousands of happy pet owners.

- **Common Name:** hedgehog
- **Scientific Name:** *Erinaceinae*
- **Distribution:** Europe, Asia, and Africa, and in New Zealand by introduction
- **Size:** 5.5 – 12 in. (depending on sub-species)
- **Life Span:** 2 - 5 years

## Hedgehogs as Pets

The African pygmy hedgehog is the most common type sold as pets. It can grow to be around six to nine inches long. Four to six years is a normal life span, but a pet hedgehog can live up to ten years. It is a solitary animal and should live alone.

A hedgehog is a very active animal. He will require a large cage even though he is small. Fortunately, there are many cages of adequate size available for reasonable prices. He will also need time outside of his cage to explore and run around.

Since hedgehogs are nocturnal, they are best for people who are home in the evenings and at night. A hedgehog may not be a suitable pet for small children. Sometimes kids can be overzealous with their affection causing a

hedgehog to become afraid and extend his quills. This could lead to injury of a child or pet.

A hedgehog is fun to watch, quiet, not aggressive, and is fairly easy to care for. It is a clean animal and has very little smell. His food is easily attainable and inexpensive. A hedgehog can be a wonderful addition for someone who wants a unique and entertaining pet.

### **Habitat**

- A cage that is at least 4 feet long and 2 feet wide. That is the minimum size so go with the biggest cage possible. Multi-level cages are a good way to increase your pet's space.
- Bedding for the bottom of the cage. Bedding made from recycled paper or pulp is a good choice.
- A hide area where your pet can go to feel safe and secure.
- A small animal litter box.
- Litter for the litter box. Litter pellets made from recycled paper work well and are safe.
- A stoppered water bottle. A heavy bowl can be used as an alternative if your hedgehog doesn't like a water bottle.
- A couple of bowls for dry and moist food. The bowls should be attachable to the cage or heavy enough to prevent spilling.
- An exercise wheel, preferably one with a solid wheel to prevent possible injury.
- A variety of toys and decor to keep your pet entertained. Examples are pipes, tubes, tunnels, ramps, ledges, balls, and bells.
- A small animal playpen for when your hedgehog is out of his cage.

### **Substrates**

- You will need some sort of bedding to line your pet's cage like Wood chips, aspen, pine shavings, old newspaper, cotton fabric or fleece are all good choices and are commonly used as bedding.
- NEVER USE CEDAR as the aromatic oils have been known to cause respiratory problems, that over time can become fatal.

- If you decide to use wood chips or pine shaving, Try to use products that have been kiln dried. What we use for our bedding is the kiln dried pine shavings.

### **Nutrition**

- A dry hedgehog food or cat food that is high in protein and made from meat or chicken.
- Canned cat or dog food to supply your pet with moist food. The food should be high in protein and made from meat or chicken.
- Fruits and vegetables that can be added to your pet's diet. Beans, peas, corn, apples, grapes, and carrots are some of the foods you can feed your hedgehog in small amounts.
- Various treats to add variety to the diet. Treats can be insects like mealworms and crickets, moist dog or cat treats, and cooked food like hamburger, chicken, or eggs

### **Socialization**

You will need to develop a relationship with your new hedgehog. Devoting as much time as possible is essential and helps to create a trusting bond.

Hedgehogs by nature are shy and timid creatures, so you will need to interact with your new pet on a daily basis. Setting play time aside each day will help your hedgehog become a custom to you and his/her new surroundings. Especially if your bringing home a new baby. With young

hedgehogs ( just weaned ) at 6 weeks of age, they will start their quilling process which last's until about 3 months of age. Interaction with your hedgehog during this time, we think is the most important. The use of hedgie bags are very helpful during this time. Remember be patient, it may take 2 to 3 weeks for your hedgehog to get adjusted to it's new environment.

This is only a basic care sheet,  
Please continue to educate yourself on your new family member.