

## CARE OF HEDGEHOGS

### Data:

Life-span: Normally 4-6 years, but pet hedgehogs can live for up to 10 years.

Adult size: 6-9 inches long



### Housing:

Hedgehogs are very active and will require a large amount of space. The cage should be at least 4 feet long and 2 feet wide. Bigger is better. A large, wire cage with a solid floor works best. Wire floors are unsuitable as it may damage the hedgehog's feet. Hedgehogs enjoy climbing, so provide multiple levels. Hedgehogs are solitary, so should be housed alone.

### Furniture:

A wood box, half log or tubing should be provided to create a hide area for the hedgehog. Climbing structures should also be provided. Further enrichment is available in the form of an exercise wheel, tubing, PVC pipes, ramps and tunnels etc. You may also provide balls and chew toys.

### Floor Covering:

There are many types of bedding that will work well. Fluffy bedding made from recycled paper or pulp is suitable. Try to avoid wood shavings as some may be harmful. Waste should be removed daily, with all bedding being replaced once a week. Dirty toys and decoration should be washed and dried.



### Temperature:

The ideal temperature for a hedgehog is 75-80 degrees (24-27 degrees Celsius). The cage should be kept away from drafts, air conditioners, heaters, windows, and other areas where the temperature may become too hot or cold.

### Lighting:

Hedgehogs do not have any special lighting requirements.

### Feeding:

The diet should be well balanced and high in protein. The amount you feed your hedgehog depends upon its activity. If it appears to be gaining weight, cut back. For dry food, dry hedgehog food may be purchased. Meat or chicken dry cat food provides a suitable alternative. Canned dog or cat food can be used for moist food. It should be high in protein and made primarily from meat or chicken. A small amount of fruit and vegetables should be provided. Suitable options include beans, peas, corn, apples, grapes and carrots. Food should be provided in two heavy bowls (one for dry food and one for moist food).

### Drinking:

A stoppered water bottle in the cage is the best method for providing water. Ensure a fresh, clean supply of water is provided.

### Breeding:

The female should be 5-12 months old when you first breed from her. Remove toys before introducing the female to the male's cage for 7 days. Gestation should last approximately 34-36 days. A nest box is essential for breeding. Litter sizes may vary from 1-9 babies (usually 3-4). Do not disturb for the first 4-5 days, after which you may look in on them each day until 3 weeks of age, when they are old enough to be handled. Do not handle for more than a minute the first time. Handle briefly each day until 5 weeks of age. For more information, visit <http://hedgehogcentral.com/reproduction.shtml>

### Interaction:

To pick up your hedgehog, gently scoop it up from the belly. Once you have picked it up, you can hold it in one hand and use the other to protect and support its back. Do not wear gloves to allow your hedgehog to become accustomed to the smell of your hand. The nails may become long and need to be cut. This is best done with human nail clippers. Avoid cutting the quick. Overzealous handling may cause the hedgehog to become afraid and extend its quills.

### Further information:

For more information, visit <http://hedgehogcare.org/>