

HEDGEHOGS



Scientific name: Atelerix albiventris

For Ages: 14 & up, with adult supervision

Pet lifespan: 4 - 6 years

Pet Size: Approximately 10 - 22cm

Nutrition

Staple diet: Provide your hedgehog with a fortified hedgehog diet or dry kitten food.

Fruits & vegetables: Chopped fruits, like bananas or apples can be fed to your hedgehog every few days. Take care not to overfeed these fresh foods. They have a high moisture content and too much can cause diarrhea.

Insects: Provide your hedgehog with fresh, canned, or freeze-dried mealworms and crickets.

Water: Change and fill your hedgehog's water bottle with clean water every day.

**Remember that fresh food items require their own dish and should be removed from the habitat after four hours to avoid spoilage. Treats should be less than 10% of total food intake.*

Supply list

Here's a list of the necessities you'll need to take home to help your new hedgehog stay healthy and happy

- Home: Appropriate size and type of cage
- Aspen or other appropriate bedding
- Water bottle
- Food bowls
- Fortified hedgehog diet or dry kitten food
- Treats: Fresh, canned, or freeze-dried mealworms
- Crickets
- Bananas and apples
- Toys: Large exercise wheel, Tubes, Balls
- Books and magazines
- Cage cleaner and disinfectant (Read and follow label instructions)

Habitat

Housing: A large aquarium is recommended but wire habitats can be used as long as there is a solid bottom to protect their feet; the space between the wires should be no larger than 2cm. Hedgehogs are also excellent climbers, so ensure the habitat has a very secure lid.

Bedding: Line the home with 5 – 8cm of bedding, and change it weekly or more often if needed.

Cage placement: Place the habitat in a cool, low humidity area, out of direct sunlight.

Traits & Behavior

Nocturnal: Hedgehogs are a nocturnal animal, meaning they sleep during the day and are awake and active during the night.

Self-Anointing: Hedgehogs have a habit called “self-anointing” which can be somewhat startling the first time an owner sees it happening. Particular smells seem to send the hedgehog into a flurry as they start to salivate profusely and spread their saliva over their back. It is not entirely known why hedgehogs do this and some seem more prone to it than others, but it is not a cause for concern.

Insectivores: Insects are a main staple in a hedgehog’s diet.

Burrowers: Hedgehogs love to hide and burrow into their bedding.

Solitary: Never house more than one hedgehog per habitat

Health

Signs of a healthy hedgehog:

- Clean, bright eyes
- Active, alert, and sociable
- Walks normally
- Eats and drinks normally
- Clean spines
- No bald patches

Things to watch for:

- Lethargic behavior
- Weight loss; not eating or drinking normally
- Labored breathing
- Missing spines
- Diarrhea
- Sneezing; discharge from the eyes, nose or mouth

Things to remember

Lifting & Handling: Your hedgehog should be handled with the utmost care. Gently scoop up your hedgehog around the sides. Your hedgehog may curl into a ball when you try to pick them up. However, if you just cradle the ball of your hedgehog in your hands the spines do not really hurt, and usually the hedgehog will unroll within a few minutes and start exploring once it realizes you mean no harm. Be careful your hedgehog does not manage to coil into a ball over one of your fingers though, this can be extremely painful.

Safety & Cleanliness: Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit a disease to humans. Keep your pet’s home clean and wash your hands before and after handling your pet or cleaning their home. Infants, young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and the infirm or elderly are at a greater risk of infections and should use caution when in contact with the pet or its habitat.

Tip: Hedgehogs can make sounds which vary from sneezing to snorting to clicking. When they are frightened they squeal. They can also make a purring sound when something interests them or they are happy



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