

Wet Pets N Critters

Care Sheet – Hedgehogs



Hedgehogs are fascinating little pets who require special care. Once a hedgehog is used to being handled, it will unroll from its protective ball and flatten its spines, so it won't be so prickly to hold.

Hedgehogs are nocturnal. When awake, they are very active and it's fun to watch them dig, go through tubes, push toys around and run on their exercise wheel. They should get at least an hour every evening out of their cage to explore.

Because hedgehogs are a little prickly, they are best for older children and adults.

One hedgehog, or more?

Hedgehogs are solitary animals and should be kept one to a cage.

Feeding

Give your hedgehog a food made specifically for hedgehogs. Or a good quality cat food. They also enjoy small amounts of meat, and commercially raised insects such as mealworms and crickets. They can also have small amounts of vegetables such as carrots. Hedgehogs can have a tendency to get fat, so don't let your hedgehog eat too much.

Housing

A hedgehog cage should be at least 18" X 24" X 12" high, filled with 3" of bedding to allow your hedgehog to dig. For bedding use shredding paper or recycled newspaper pellets for small animals. Do not use cedar shavings. Most hedgehogs can be trained to use a litter box which can be filled with a different paper bedding than in the cage with a different texture but never cat litter.

Accessories

Hedgehogs need a water and a non-tip food dish. They also need a large solid surface exercise wheel and a house to hide and sleep in. They like it dark! Hedgehogs also enjoy tubes, climbing toys such as ramps and branches, and small toys they can push around.

Sanitation

Clean the litter box as needed, and clean the cage perhaps 1-2 times a week. Clean the water bottle weekly, scrubbing all parts. The wheel will probably need to be cleaned every morning.

Maintenance

Hedgehogs have a strange habit called anointing where they cover themselves with their saliva in response to new smells. A hedgehog who gets dirty can be brushed with a toothbrush dipped in water, and if very dirty, sprayed with a water bottle. Some hedgehogs enjoy taking a bath. Hedgehogs need their nails trimmed occasionally.

Health care

West Loop Animal Hospital and Kimbrough Animal Hospital offer care for pocket pets such as hedgehogs.

Special needs

Hedgehogs need at least 10 hours of light per day or they will go into hibernation. When using a heat lamp never use a red or white one at night as it will disrupt their cycle. Some hedgehogs, especially young ones, like to taste things. Occasionally, after a hedgehog licks your hand, it will nip, although this will rarely break the skin. Place a hedgehog who does this back in its cage. Try not to handle a hedgehog if your hands smell like food.

Life cycle

Hedgehogs live an average of 3 1/2 years.

Expert Help

If you have questions about your hedgehog, do not hesitate to contact us. Although this care sheet is provided to give you an overview of information additional research should be done. A good place to start is hedgehogcare.org

Supplies Checklist

Cage	Exercise wheel	Litter box
Bedding	Climbing toys and tubes	Other bedding
Water bottle	Push toys	Nest box
Dry-food dish		
Hedgehog food		