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Part One.

Introduction to the African Pygmy Hedgehog.

It’s hard not to fall in love with the snuffly face, it’s big round eyes, cute boopish nose and long seal like whiskers. Cute? Heck yeah! Designer pet? No.

The African Pygmy Hedgehog is often advertised in the media as a “micro hedgehog” or a “teacup hedgehog” however these terms aren’t at all accurate some African Pygmy Hedgehogs can reach the same weight of their European cousins. Although related the Wild European Hedgehog and the African Pygmy Hedgehog are classed as a different “family” meaning their requirements are very different.

Did you know the African Pygmy Hedgehog and the European Hedgehog can’t produce offspring together?

If you are thinking of getting an African Pygmy Hedgehog for your garden then sadly they aren’t for you, African Pygmy Hedgehogs need to be kept indoors and above 21c at all times. African Pygmy Hedgehogs can’t survive a full hibernation, although the reason for this isn’t fully known it’s believed it’s due to their size and being from warmer climates.

Hedgehogs have around 5,000 sharp quills along the top of their body. This helps them have a line of defence should they feel threatened. When threatened Hedgehogs will ball up, this means that there is no furry part of the hedgehog showing. The quills act as a barrier against any wild animal that may try to take a bite out of the hedgehog. Not only do they cause the predator pain but they also protect the main organs from damage.

African Pygmy Hedgehogs are nocturnal, this means that their day time is our night time. Although it’s okay on occasion to wake your hedgehog up during the day, it’s advised that for the majority of the time the hedgehog is left to sleep and wake at its natural time. This reduces stress to the hedgehog.

Although African Pygmy Hedgehogs are rewarding pets, they aren’t always suitable for every household. They require a lot of time and patience (not all hedgehogs are friendly!) and if you have a very busy life and like early nights then a hedgehog may not be the best pet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Span</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average Litter Size</td>
<td>3-5 hoglets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Weight</td>
<td>300g – 450g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Cycle</td>
<td>Nocturnal</td>
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Am I a suitable owner for a Hedgehog?

Excellent question, often people ask if a hedgehog is suitable for them. When in reality it’s rarely the hedgehogs fault if it finds itself looking for another home later on.

The key questions you should ask yourself is:
1. Do I have patience? Hedgehogs rarely come friendly and require a lot of time and attention to get them to that friendly stage, some hedgehogs like some humans, never become friendly.
2. Do you have space? The absolute minimum housing requirement is 3ft, however 4ft is best.
3. Do you have money? Not only do hedgehogs cost a lot to start out with (the hedgehog, the equipment, food etc) but should your hedgehog need a vet you’d have to pay more to see a specialist exotic vet.
4. Do I have the time? Especially in the evenings. Most people like to come home from work, watch some TV and grab an early night. However, this is prime hedgehog handling time.

With those questions in mind, the main reasons we’ve seen for rehoming a Hedgehog have been:
- I’m now pregnant and don’t have time.
- My children and hedgehog don’t get along.
- My child has lost interest in the hedgehog.
- I don’t have time for my hedgehog.
- My landlord won’t allow me to keep my hedgehog.

If you feel any of the above are likely to happen in your situation then at this time a Hedgehog isn’t for you. Situations change and that’s understandable however there’s plenty of time for you to enrich your life with a hedgehog, it doesn’t have to be now.

How do I find a hedgehog?

There are many ways you can get an African Pygmy Hedgehog, below are the various ways including the pros and cons. The rest is up to you.

**Pet Shop**
Some pet shops sell African Pygmy Hedgehogs, usually around the £200 price range.

**Pros:** Don’t have to wait, can take it home the same day.

**Cons:** Pet shops often don’t know how to correctly care for their hedgehogs so often hedgehogs have health conditions, mites, fungal infections and aren’t social. You also have no way of knowing what sort of breeder the pet shop sourced your hedgehog from.

**Club Approved Breeder**
Club approved breeders adhere to a strict code of ethics to ensure the very best care is provided to the hedgehog from birth. They are also required to register all their hedgehogs with known lineage and keep detailed health records. The average cost is £150 - £170.

**Pros:** Your hedgehog comes registered with a history of their ancestors, your hedgehog has been given the best care since birth, club breeders are required to provided aftercare and support with all their hedgehogs.

**Cons:** You will likely have to wait for a litter to be born.

**Private Rehome**
A private rehome is when someone can no longer care for their hedgehog so they often sell it via pet selling sites.

**Pros:** Often they are less than the cost of a hoglet, you are giving a home to a hedgehog that
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needs it.
Cons: The majority of private rehomes are older hogs which may not have had the best start in life.

**Hobby Breeder**
A Hobby breeder is a breeder that isn’t Club approved, some are excellent and some aren’t.
**Pros:** Large hobby breeders often have many hoglets to pick from at any one time, some good ones will offer club registration certificates with their hedgehogs.
**Cons:** Unlike Club approved breeders, hobby breeders don’t have a code of ethics to abide to nor do they have anyone checking to ensure no inbreeding or over breeding takes place.

**Rescue**
Rescues are places that Hedgehogs often end up when there’s no home for them. Rescues will then work to find the best home possible for the hedgehog.
**Pros:** You help a hedgehog find a forever home, often you are giving a home to a hedgehog that’s had a tough start.
**Cons:** Sadly most rescues do tend to be on the adult side and so do need more attention and handling to help them get used to a new home.

All hedgehogs deserve a home, love and care. Even if those hedgehogs are older or huffy. It’s up to you to decide what you think you can handle and what you can provide.

Questions to ask a breeder.

If you decide go to the route of getting your hedgehog from a breeder, it’s important to know you are supporting a good breeder. A good breeder not only means on-going support but it can put your mind at ease about how your hoglet is raised until you pick him/her up at 7-8 weeks.
• Can you meet mum and dad? Unless a stud was used the breeder should be able to let you meet both parents. This will let you get an idea of temperament and size.
• Is your hoglet registered? Any good breeder will register their hedgehogs, this allows both the breeder and the club to track health conditions, over breeding and inbreeding.
• Does your hoglet come with a care pack? A good breeder will let their hoglet leave with a care pack including food, blankets and other goodies to help the hedgehog settle in to their new home.
• Is there any history of health issues in the line? Your breeder should be able to tell you of any conditions that have previously happened in the line such as Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome, Cancer or other problems.
• Do you give aftercare? Any good breeder shouldn’t stop caring as soon as you leave their door. Most owners need guidance in their first few weeks and it’s important to know you’ve got the support of your hoglets breeder.

Any good breeder will ask you detailed questions, you can expect to be asked questions such as “what do you plan on feeding your hedgehog” and “What are you planning to keep your hedgehog in?”. Please answer the breeders questions as honestly as possible, don’t tell them what you think they want to hear. They will appreciate the honesty.

Some good breeders will ask you to sign a contract or enter into a verbal contract and will request that you return the hedgehog to them should you be unable to care for it. This is critical as breeders put a lot of time and love into their litters and want to know where they are and that they are in the best home possible.

You should avoid any breeder that avoids your questions, sells to pet shops, mass breeds, refuses to register their hedgehogs (it’s quick and there’s no good reason not to), has previously sold a sick hedgehog or any breeder that you don’t feel 100% confident about. Follow your gut!

Part Two

Bringing Your Hedgehog Home.

What you need before you bring your hedgehog home.

• Viv with heat source and thermostat.
• Substrate such as finacard/softacard/fleece liners.
• Wheel and litter tray.
• Food (a mix of 3-4 dry foods and live foods)
• Carry box.
• Snugglesafe microwave heat pad (for the journey!)
• Pouches (you can never have too many)
• Flaxseed oil.
• Toys / forage tray.
• Play Pen
• Food and water bowls.
• Found an exotic vet.
Before you leave the breeders house

Before you leave the breeders house, check your hoglet over. Does he have clear eyes? A clear bum? Is his skin ok? Are his ears clean? Does he seem alert?

If at this point you see something you are unhappy with, you need to inform your breeder. We have seen cases where a breeder has sold a sick hedgehog and it’s been left to the new owner to pay all the vet bills and in some cases, the hoglet hasn’t survived.

If your hoglet seems unwell the breeder should be happy to keep him and treat him until he is well enough to leave.

Once you get home

Once you are home, pick up your hedgehog in the blanket/pouch and put him carefully in his viv. Ensure the heating level is right and that there’s fresh food and water in the viv. Then let your knew prickly pet sleep, the chances are all the stimuli from traveling will have made him very tired.

It’s suggested that you let your new hedgehog adapt for a night before starting to handle him. This gives him time to get used to his viv, the smells and sights. However, every hedgehog is different, some may need longer. It’s up to you to assess your hedgehog’s response and respond accordingly.

Don’t be alarmed if you see green poo in your hedgehog’s viv in the first day or so. Traveling and stress can often cause their poo to change and for them to have a mild tummy upset. When giving your hedgehog food, give the food provided by the breeder at first and slowly wean over onto the food you wish for him to be on. This reduces the chances of an upset tummy or him refusing to eat all together.

Your hedgehog may stop eating or eat less for a few days, try not to stress as a move is a big thing for a hedgehog and it will take him time to feel settled. Keep a close eye on his weight, if you feel his refusal to eat is becoming a problem and you have tried a variety of foods then a trip to the vet might be best just to ensure there’s no underlying cause.

When you go to pick up your hedgehog it’s wise to pick him up in a pouch or fleece and then slowly work him onto your hands. Hedgehogs respond better on skin so avoid using gloves or handling only in a blanket. The more time he gets to spend on your skin the better the chances are of him bonding with you.

You should try to keep your hedgehog to a routine, hedgehogs love routines. Try to set aside at least 30 mins a day for your hedgehog, aim to keep it around the same time each day. As time goes on your hedgehog will start to expect you around that time.

If your new hedgehog is a hoglet then the chances are he will be quilling. Quilling (more details about quilling in the health section) is very painful and it can turn a friendly hedgehog into a huffing ball of nightmares. However, this doesn’t mean you should stop handling your hedgehog. During quilling it is vital that you handle your hedgehog daily, as once quilling has stopped the hedgehog will be friendlier than if you stop handling.

- Change over food gradually.
- Keep to a routine.
- Handle often, especially during quilling.
It can take weeks for a hedgehog to settle into their new home so be patient if he seems shy.

Don’t worry, you’ve got this!

![Image of a hedgehog being held in a hand]

**Part Three.**

**Housing**

At the moment the two most widely used types of housing are a large Zoozone 2 or a Vivarium (minimum 3ft long x 18in wide). The bigger the housing you can provide the better it will be for your hedgehog.

Vivariums keep heat in well and are easy to stack if you intend to have more than one hedgehog. 4ft vivariums seem to be the most popular size for African Pygmy Hedgehogs, as there’s enough space for the wheel, litter tray, sleeping area and food dishes whilst still allowing space for your hedgehog to move around.

Zoozone 2 is around the same price as a Vivarium, they are easy to clean however they are slightly more difficult to heat.

Within your hedgehog's home you should supply an area for him to sleep in, some owners like to use wooden Huffy pops houses with pouches and blankets inside. Alternatively you can use a plastic igloo (large).

It’s wise to put his wheel in the litter tray as hedgehogs love to poo and wee as they run! It’s very messy and smelly so may require daily cleaning depending on how active your hedgehog is.
Heating

To heat your hedgehogs home we suggest using a Ceramic Heat Emitter with a Pulse thermostat. This is the most effective way of keeping a steady safe heat for your hedgehog.

For those with dedicated Hedgehog rooms that are heated at all times a mixture of Petnap heat pads and plug in electric heaters are a good option. However, only in homes that are warm and in rooms that are dedicated to being kept at hedgehog temp all year round.

Enrichment.

There are various ways to provide enrichment to your hedgehog. Hedgehogs are very active and love various challenges. Hide treats around the vivarium, provide tunnels and a range of hiding places and toys. Forage trays with blackcurrant and apple leaves, finacard, care fresh and treats/ live food hidden inside.

You can also use toilet roll tubes cut length ways (so that your hedgehog doesn't get stuck)

Create your own little hedgehog play paradise with a childrens ball bit with tunnels, tubes, forage tray, wheel and of course plenty of places to hide.

Taking Your Hedgehog Outside

Some owners like to take their Hedgehogs outside for some enrichment, a nice wonder on the grass can stimulate all the Hedgehogs senses and it’s also a great time for Photos. There are many things you should consider before you decide to take your Hedgehog outside.

Is it warm enough? Although it may feel warm to us Humans, Hedgehogs require constant warmth and can get cold very quickly. Check the temperature before taking your Hedgehog outside, even if it’s just for a few minutes.
Is it safe? Pesticides are widely used in gardens and traces can be carried from garden to garden by insects, wild life and neighbourhood cats. Are your pet dogs running excitedly around the garden? It is easy for a big clumsy dog to injure a Hedgehog.

Will your Hedgehog be able to escape? Some owners will take the playpen outside however never underestimate a Hedgehog’s will to escape. If he’s going to be outside you need to watch him.

Try to avoid letting him near any plants that could be dangerous to animals, although it’s only for a short time the damage can be fatal. By taking him outside you are also exposing him to the risks of picking up fleas and ticks, you may need to check him over afterwards to make sure he brought back no nasty parasites.

### Wheels

Ideally your hedgehog needs to have a plastic wheel, metal wheels or barred wheels cause damage to their legs. Wheels need to be big to hold the hedgehog without causing cramping of the back area.

The wheels we strongly suggest using are:

- TicTac Bucket Wheel - £29 including p&p [http://www.tictacwheels.co.uk/bucket-wheels](http://www.tictacwheels.co.uk/bucket-wheels)

These wheels are tried and tested on hedgehogs and work like a charm. Each has their unique plus points so check them all out and pick the one that suits your hog best.
Part Four.

Handling and behaviour.

Handling.

As discussed earlier it’s vital to handle your hedgehog every night, especially as a hoglet to give you the best chance of bonding with him. Setting out a clear evening routine will get your hedgehog used to you and what you are going to do each night. Try to include feeding live food or his favourite treat during your time together, this will help him see the bonding time as a positive experience.

Like humans every hedgehog is different, some are very friendly and outgoing whilst others are shy and reserved. There are sometimes “cuddly” hogs that like to sleep on their owner and cuddle with them. And there are others who are more active and will spend a cuddle flapping around trying to get away to explore.

Confident handling will help your hedgehog feel confident with you. If you feel nervous your hedgehog will sense it and likely act nervous too.

You often get back what you put in to your hedgehog so plenty of handling and patience can provide the best results with your hedgehog.

Behaviour

Companionship

African pygmy hedgehogs live solitary lives in the wild and for this reason have no need for the company of other hogs. They are also territorial. Males should never be kept in the same enclosure as they will fight, sometimes to the death.

A male and female pair kept together will continuously mate and are then likely to eat the babies, and apart from the obviously horrible aspect of this cycle there will be a very negative impact on the female’s health; they should therefore only be placed together for short periods for the purpose of mating.

No mixed sex ‘play time’, mating can happen very quickly it is a popular opinion that being around the male may also trigger ovulation; if this happens repeatedly with no pregnancy then the female may be at increased risk of developing cancers of the reproductive system.

Females can sometimes be kept successfully together, particularly if they have been raised together or are mother and daughter; however, there is still a risk of fighting and injury.
Females kept together will need plenty of space and two of everything (food bowls, wheels etc); the situation will need to be carefully monitored.

Anointing.

Anointing is a very odd behaviour, if you are unaware of what it is it can be alarming to see. Often people think their hedgehog is sick however this isn't the case. It's not fully known why Hedgehogs anoint but it's believed that when they smell a smell that they like (or dislike) they will lick and chew at the item, foam at the mouth, bend their head around their back and lick their quills with their tongue. Covering their quills with a foamy spit. If the hedgehog is doing it with something coloured like a strawberry then you will likely have a pink hedgehog for a few days. Unless the item is toxic or harmful, there's no need to stop them from anointing.

If you find an oddly coloured patch of quills on your hedgehog then he may have anointed something onto himself. Give him a bath before you panic too much.

Below are some anointing pictures.
Noises

Pygmy hedgehogs are pretty quiet pets but they do make a variety of noises. They are easily startled; they are prey animals and have poor eyesight. Sudden movements or loud noises are likely to get a reaction. If they are unsure/a bit scared they will make hissing and heavy breathing 'huffing' noises. These are generally accompanied by body language: quills may be elevated; forehead quills are likely to be lowered over the eyes. Hedgehogs who do not want to be handled may hiss and 'pop', jumping and twitching in order to spike, the forehead quills can also be used to ram.

If the hedgehog is very angry or feels extremely threatened then the noise level escalates and the hedgehog may make an 'angry purring', or may even make loud sounds that could be described as barking or coughing. When it gets to this stage the hedgehog may be in a ball, vibrating and bouncing. This is pretty intimidating!

Defence Mechanisms

Hedgehogs are more likely to use their quills to repel than aggressively bite, which involves latching on and refusing to let go. This doesn’t happen very often, although they may nip at fingers when they do not wish to co-operate with handling. Young hogs may nip at your hands in an exploratory way, basically to see what happens. Hand reared hedgehogs often bite, presumably through over confidence with humans/not learning social skills from their mother.

Residue on hands that the hog likes the smell of may result in the hedgehog chewing fingers and use the scent to anoint. It’s strongly suggested to wash your hands before handling a hedgehog for this reason.

Try to avoid using scented soap and perfume before handling your hedgehog.
Part 5

Feeding and Nutrition.

Provide fresh food and water daily, in bowls. Water bottles can damage teeth. A good quality, varied diet is vital to good health and as enrichment. It is a good idea to include some calcium rich foods such as calci worms, canned insects (which have added calcium), pinkies, kale and broccoli amongst the treat foods that you offer. Cooked meals can be made for them in batches and then frozen, divided into small tubs or set into portions using an ice cube tray.

The dry kibble is important in terms of the hogs getting a balanced diet and it should be fed to them every day. Treat foods and insects should not be offered in such large amounts that the hog is not eating its biscuits. As a rough guide for small hoglets I would advise offering no more than two heaped teaspoons of treats per night. It is also worth remembering that babies' digestive tracts are still developing; new foods should be introduced gradually. It can also take time for babies to decide to try new foods, and a new food may have to be offered over the course of several nights before it is accepted. Hogs don't always eat in front of their owners; leave treats in overnight.

Dry Food/ Kibble

The staple diet for african pygmy hedgehogs should be high quality, poultry based cat biscuits. The first ingredient in the kibble should be meat, not cereal, and protein should be around 30-35% whilst fat should be around 10-15%. In general light, sterilized and senior versions of a brand will be lower in fat. You can obviously tweak your mix a bit if your hog is overweight or underweight. It is recommended to use a blend of at least three or four different brands of kibble, and to have an indoor cat biscuit as part of the mix to help with odour control. Biscuits with the ingredient 'fish meal' or shellfish are generally avoided, although fish oils are okay.

Low quality brands such as go cat, whiskas, webbox and supermarket own brand should be avoided, and biscuits should be used within 12 weeks of opening.

Some good options for a mix are as follows:

Three of the following:
- Wainwrights light
- Harringtons chicken and rice
- Ava optimum health
- Ava weight management
- Arden grange light
- Royal canin light (although high protein, only use as part of a mix)

Low quality brands such as go cat, whiskas, webbox and supermarket own brand should be avoided, and biscuits should be used within 12 weeks of opening.
o Applaws senior (** use only as part of a mix**)  
o Wellness healthy weight  

Plus one of the following:  

o Royal canin indoor  
o Purina one indoor turkey and wholegrain  
o James wellbeloved housecat  
o Wellness indoor  
o Purina proplan housecat  

These are only an example, you should cater your mix to suit your hedgehogs needs.

**Meats**

When feeding meat it should be unsalted and with no flavours added.

Hedgehog safe meats include:

- Chicken (off the bone)  
- Beef (cut up)  
- Mince  
- Lamb (off the bone)  
- Pheasant  
- Turkey  

Many hogs love boiled shredded chicken and mince (lamb, turkey, beef) dry fried with finely chopped cooked veg. Hogs also enjoy cooked egg (don’t add milk or butter); some keepers make scrambled egg with fillings such as veg, chicken and crushed dried meal worms. The hogs also enjoy pancakes made from egg and banana mashed together and cooked in a non-stick pan.

**Fruit and Vegetables**
Fruit and vegetables should also be offered, although not all hogs will eat them and for this reason you may wish to combine them with meat meals. They are more likely to eat these items in general if they are cut into small pieces.

Some safe fruits include:

- Strawberry
- Banana
- Apple
- Cherry
- Pear
- Kiwi
- Blueberries
- Mango
- Peach
- Pumpkin (no seeds)

Citrus fruits and tomatoes are judged to be too acidic.

Some safe vegetables include:

- Carrots
- Peas
- Bell peppers
- Sweet potato
- Sweetcorn
- Swede
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Butternut Squash
- Courgette.
- Spinach
- Cucumber

Although not the entire list these are the most common fruits and vegetables we are asked about the safety of.

**Dangerous Foods**

As with any animal there are some foods that African Pygmy Hedgehogs cannot eat. If you are in doubt about a food not listed then please avoid, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Some dangerous foods include:

- Chocolate
- Onions
- Grapes
- Raisins
• Rhubarb leaves
• Seeds and Nuts (choking hazard)

It's also advised that you don't feed your hedgehog junk food, hedgehogs are already prone to weight problems and encouraging unhealthy food isn't the best way to help your hedgehog.

**Fish**

Fish is not recommended by everyone as it is thought to be difficult to digest and there have been reports of some hogs being allergic; ideas about this are changing in some quarters within the UK but the topic is controversial. Keepers in some other countries do routinely use fish products. The most commonly utilized fish is salmon or trout; fresh, cooked and offered in occasional small portions. There have been reports of foul smelling faeces the day after!

**Raw Food**

It is fairly common practice for owners and breeders to feed their hogs pinkie mice from time to time (usually bought frozen and fed raw once thawed). These are a nutritious treat although usually offered sparingly as can be fattening. Some UK keepers have also, on the recommendation of breeders from other European countries, recently been trialling use of raw feed designed for animals such as dogs and cats. This is being offered as a treat food, maybe around two tea spoons in a serving, alongside the usual dry mix. Kiezebrink UK (online shop) is a commonly used supplier. It is thought that there is some risk of salmonella with raw feeding; for this reason some prefer to avoid commercially farmed poultry products, which pose the highest risk on this regard.

**Insects**

Insects are an important part of the hogs' diet; they contain a type of fibre called chitin with hedgehogs' digestive tracts are designed to utilize and which helps with fat absorption. Live insects can also provide good enrichment. Most commonly used are meal worms, wax worms, morio worms, grasshoppers, locusts, dubia roaches, crickets and calci worms. Silk worms and pachnoda grubs are also used by some. Some keepers feed the faster moving insects to the hogs using tongs, or slow them down by putting them in the fridge for a while. If you don't cope well with live insects or your hog is a bit shy and won't eat them when you are watching then you can kill them by putting them in the freezer.

Live insects should be 'gut loaded' before feeding; starving insects won't be very nutritious. Wax worms eat honey and bran (although some say that they have stopped eating at the point in their life cycle when we buy them?); hoppers, crickets and locusts eat green leafy stuff and maybe a slice of potato or carrot for moisture; and roaches, morio worms and meal worms eat oats and slices of carrot/potato/apple. Special commercial bug foods are also available. Locusts will die quickly if you feed them leafy stuff unless they are placed on a heat mat; they need the heat to digest their food.

Freeze dried insects can also be offered and dried mealworms in particular are usually accepted. Dried insects are however not as nutritious, and should not be fed in large amounts as this can cause impaction in the gut. You can also buy canned insects online, they are quite
expensive so I would advise shopping around for them; the hogs sometimes enjoy them although not usually as much as live food. Canned bamboo worms go down well with many, although they are fattening so should not be fed too often.

<table>
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<th>Protein %</th>
<th>Fat %</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>20%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crickets</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wax Worms</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk Worm</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubia Roaches</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locusts</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasshoppers</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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**Dairy Products**

APH have until recently been presumed lactose intolerant. Recently there has however been a suggestion from some sources that they are actually allergic to casein, which is a protein present in cows’ milk. Some owners have opted to offer occasional treats of very small amounts of cat milk, goats milk, lactofree milk or cottage cheese (which apparently doesn’t contain much lactose). If you give your animal a large portion of one of these milks then they are likely to get an upset stomach.

**Supplements**

With regard to dietary supplements most owners put a few drops of flaxseed oil in the food once per week in order to promote healthy skin, maybe more frequently if the hog is quilling or has dry skin. Some owners use coconut oil in the same way. Evening primrose oil is used by some but is apparently harmful in high doses so best avoided. If the hedgehog has a good diet then vitamin supplements are probably not necessary, however problems such as calcium deficiency are apparently fairly common in exotic pets and it is impossible to accurately replicate a wild diet. Some owners sprinkle a small amount of Nutrobal powder in the food around once per week; this supplement contains calcium, vitamin D3 (which helps the body absorb calcium), and multivitamins. When hedgehogs are experiencing stress such as moving home, or when they are recovering from a bout of illness, it can also be beneficial to add a probiotic to their food. In these instances Avipro Avian is a good choice, and can also be used for regular dietary supplementation.

**Part 6**

**Health**

Please note that this is just advice and should never replace seeing a vet. If you feel your hedgehog is sick please seek vet treatment as soon as possible.

**Immediate Concerns**

**Bloody urine/stools** – This is very serious and can be the sign of something that needs urgent treatment.

**Vomiting** – If your hedgehog is being sick for no obvious reason then you must seek urgent treatment as vomiting can lead to dehydration very quickly and can be fatal.
Diarrhea – Sometimes if a Hedgehog has been traveling or has gone through a big change they may suffer with Diarrhea or green stools, this should stop within a few days. If it doesn’t please seek veterinary advice as Diarrhea can lead to dehydration.

Lethargy – Hedgehogs are quite active creatures, if your Hedgehog has been Lethargic it’s vital you get him to a vet lethargy could be a symptom of a more serious condition. Often Hedgehogs are lethargic after a hibernation attempt but they often come back around within a couple of hours of being warmed up. If this hasn’t happened you need to see a vet.

Paralysis – This could be a sign of a stroke or other neurological event, or possibly even a spinal injury. It’s very important you take your hedgehog to the vet straight away on discovering him like that.

These conditions are best treated fast, the faster you see a veterinarian the better the chance of recovery for your Hedgehog. Please never leave any Animal without veterinary treatment.

Quilling

Quilling can only be compared to teething in human babies. Quilling is when baby quills fall out and bigger adult quills grow in. This can last until around 18 weeks of age, sometimes longer if the hedgehog is having a hard time with it. Whilst this is happening your hedgehog will be very sore, his skin may appear red and dry. Your hedgehog will be huffier during this time due to the pain. However, it’s very important that you continue to handle your hedgehog during this time.

Don’t bath your hedgehog too much as this will dry his skin out causing it to be more irritated. If your hedgehog is quilling we suggest using Flaxseed oil on his food 2-3 times a week. Simply pop the flaxseed capsule and pour the oil onto the dry food.

Hibernation Attempt

Hibernation is the most common issue African Pygmy Hedgehog owners face. Sadly due to the size of African Pygmy Hedgehogs their body doesn’t contain the reserves to sustain hibernation. This means that hibernation is often fatal if the hedgehog isn’t brought around in time or the hedgehog is older/weaker.

Hibernation happens when hedgehogs get cold which is why we suggest using a heat source (such as a ceramic heat emitter with thermostat) to keep your pygmy hedgehog at a constant heat.

Symptoms include:

- Cold/Cool belly.
- Unable to unball.
- Slow huffing.
- Wobbliness.
- Lack of activity.
Should your hedgehog attempt hibernation you need to warm them up, however try not to heat them too quickly. If your hedgehog gets warm too fast it could lead to shock. Gradually heat them up either on a heat pad or against your skin (under your clothes).

Please don’t put them in warm or hot water, this will result in them becoming cold again very quickly.

If after 1 hour of being gradually heated there's no sign of improvement please seek vet attention. It could take a couple of hours for your hedgehog to return fully back to himself.

**Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome**

Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome (WHS) is a slow progressive neurological disease. Although an exact cause isn’t known it’s believed to have a strong genetic factor. Hedgehogs with WHS typically start with symptoms around the 2 - 2.5 year mark. WHS presents itself with symptoms similar to MS in humans. Typically, the hedgehog will start to be unsteady on it’s back legs, which slowly over time become fully paralysed. The front legs then start to slowly become paralysed, the hedgehogs condition continues to deteriorate until it’s either put to sleep or it's organs fail.

Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome can only be officially diagnosed via necropsy of the brain after death.

Many vets falsely diagnose WHS whenever a hedgehog unsteady on it's feet comes in, this is because most vets in the UK are working from outdated studies from the 1990's in America, were WHS is much more common. It’s easier to diagnose a wobbly hedgehog with WHS than it is to do more tests to rule out other issues.

There is no cure for WHS and it is a death sentence, there’s no way to fix it. However as the hedgehogs mobility becomes worse you can adapt their home to be more suitable. As time goes on you may need to start syringe feeding your hedgehog.

It's important to note that as of March 2019 there have been no confirmed cases of WHS in the UK since 2011.

The African Pygmy Hedgehog Club Registry continues to monitor the situation.

**Mites / Fungus / Fleas**

African Pygmy Hedgehogs are affected by fungal infections, including ring worm, and mites. A furry/mouldy looking face, flakey skin, quill loss, yellow crusting, and tiny white specs coming off or constant itching are a sign of mites/ fungal infections/fleas. Some mites burrow and some live inside ears- if a hog is scratching it is best to treat, and also get a skin scrape at an exotics vet as the scratching could also be due to an allergy. F10 Products Germicidal Wound Spray with Insecticide is good to spray on hog’s skin on alternate days during fungus or mites. Xeno 50 pipettes can be used to treat mites, for a 300g hog put the full pipette onto the hog’s back every 2 weeks up to 3 times to treat mites. If after doing this the hog still has mites go to the vet. Ardep spray can be used to treat vivariums and carpets with parasites present. Vets can prescribe frontline kitten and puppy spot on to clear severe mite infections.
Ring worm, whilst uncommon in African Pygmy Hedgehogs, is transmittable to humans and therefore a trip to the doctor is advised. Hogs can also be infected with pin (thread) worms. Some owners treat for both internal and external parasites as a precaution every six months using a product such as Xeno 50 Mini Spot- on.

Injured / Swollen Limbs

Pieces of hair, straw, thread and such like can get wound around limbs and if this is not noticed in time can lead to amputation. If you think a hair is wrapped around your hedgehog’s leg please take him to the vet immediately. The longer the hair is left on, the less likely it will be that they can save the leg. Hedgehogs are very bad at climbing down, in barred cages leg injuries are common. If your hedgehog has potentially fallen and injured his leg please seek the vets guidance, it’s likely he will need an x-ray to rule out any broken bones.

Upset Tummy / Runny Poo

Syringe feeding some avipro avian (tiny spec- 0.05g) dissolved into 1-2ml of slightly warm water three times a day can help to settle an upset tummy. The avian variety of avipro has both pro and pre biotic, which the other varieties no longer have, Adding the same amount of Nutrobal to water will help to top up nutrients lost. Only feed dry biscuits. Keep an eye on your hedgehog if this lasts more than a day go to the vet before your hedgehog becomes dehydrated.

Constipation

A constipated hedgehog can be helped with a warm bath, by adding a full capsule of flaxseed oil to their biscuits and feeding some pumpkin (cooked). Pumpkin baby foods such as Ella’s kitchen can also be used. Syringe feeding some avipro (tiny spec- 0.05g) dissolved into 1-2ml of slightly warm water twice a day can help to settle an upset tummy. Constipation can be caused by too much dry food or stress.

Not Eating

This is a sign of pain or illness and it is best to see a vet ASAP. If this is not possible (e.g. Christmas Day) syringing 2ml of either hills a/d, Emeraid Omnivore care, Emeraid carnivore care, oxbow carnivore care or Vetark critical care every 2 hours (you can add a spec of nutrobal and avipro) will stop the hog becoming weak. To make up critical care add a tiny pinch to 2ml of slightly warm water (boiled and cooled) and mix, keep adding until thick and feed with a syringe. Hills A/D can be syringed from can or a small bit of slightly warm water (boiled and cooled) can be added to make the consistency easier to syringe.Boiled chicken thighs, taken off the bone and liquidised with cooking liquid, can be syringe fed, or tempt the hedgehog to eat from the bowl. This can be fed slightly warm.
Obesity

African Pygmy Hedgehogs are prone to obesity. For this reason it is important to feed a good quality, low fat diet and to encourage exercise by providing a suitable exercise wheel and a large living space. Daily access to either run around the floor or to have access to a playpen with toys and other forms of enrichment is desirable. Many owners use a small animal play pen or a child’s ball pit for this purpose. Hedgehogs kept in cramped conditions can be stressed, and stress can lead to self-harm (commonly by biting the upper chest area). Indicators that an African pygmy is overweight include it being unable to fully ball up, and having a double chin and bingo wings.

Fatty Liver Disease

Obesity and/or a high fat diet with insufficient exercise can be factors in the onset of a condition called fatty liver disease, although the condition is also linked to other issues such as the hedgehog not eating for several days. This condition can cause yellowing of the skin, anorexia, lethargy, and eventual death. Hedgehogs who stop eating for more than a day or two need to see a vet, but owners should also commence feeding a liquid diet via syringe in order to stave off this illness.

Kidney Issues

If levels of protein are too high then this can affect the kidneys. Therefore it is important to stick to the recommended fat and protein ranges when purchasing dried cat biscuits. Discoloured urine, drinking heavily, a change in appetite or changes in weight can indicate this.

Calcium Deficiency

Calcium deficiency can manifest in a similar way to wobbly hedgehog syndrome, but is easily treated. This problem can cause many symptoms such as muscle wastage, unexplained weight loss, lethargy, seizures, and problems with mobility eg limping, wobbliness. The condition is apparently quite common in exotic pets due to difficulties emulating the wild diet. Foods such as farmed insects and cuts of meat are judged to be low in calcium, and should not be fed in such large amounts that the dried kibble mix is not being eaten. It is desirable to supplement an African pygmy hedgehog’s diet from time to time with calcium rich foods such as pinkie mice, canned insects (which have added calcium), calci worms, broccoli and kale. It is also a good idea to sprinkle a small amount of nutrobal powder on their food once per week; this supplement contains calcium, vitamin D3 (which aids calcium absorption) and multivitamins.

Ear Infections

If you have noticed your hedgehogs ears are very waxy and he’s unsteady on his feet, tilting his head to the side and/ or is off his food then he may have an ear infection. Avoid messing with it or touching it, as this may make it worse. Take your hedgehog to the vet who will be able to provide anti biotics to help treat the infection.

Dental Problems
African Pygmy Hedgehogs tend to suffer from dental issues such as gum infections, damaged teeth and so on. A hedgehog suffering from dental problems may be off his food, groggy and generally grumpy. He also may slobber as he eats. The only way to fix a dental problem is with vet assistance. Your vet will check the mouth area, if your hedgehog isn't willing then he may have to give him some gas.

In more serious cases (i.e. in suspected oral cancer) an x-ray and biopsy may need to be taken.

Grooming

Nail Clipping

This is not an easy task, your hedgehog will do its best to move around and ball up as you clip down the nails, patience is the only suggestion. If your Hedgehog is quite friendly and calm you can sit him with his belly on your palm, with his feet dropped between your fingers. Whilst he’s comfortable and still take the clippers and clip carefully one nail at a time. Some Hedgehogs will stay still during this time, others may flail around and be far more interested in going on an adventure than having their pamper session. As you look at the nail, you will see a line across the nail; this is called the “quick”, if you cut past the quick your hedgehog’s toe will bleed. It is best to avoid cutting to close to the quick until you are fully confident in clipping your hedgehog’s nails.

Cutting the nails can be done on the owner’s knee or in the sink. In the sink place a face flannel in the bottom of the sink or bowl, this makes the sink less slippery.
If you cut the quick you should apply pressure, it can bleed for some time. If it’s still not stopped bleeding you can use corn flower or a coagulant like Trimmex to cause the blood to clot (although ensure your hedgehog doesn’t eat it).

We recommend using “Baby nail clippers” which you can get from most baby areas in supermarkets or on amazon.

There are some hedgehogs that, even with their owners best attempts will never let you cut their nails. In these cases a trip to the vet is required as leaving nails to get too long can result in them imbedding themselves into the pad of the foot causing long term pain and mobility issues.

**Bathing**

Excess bathing is bad for a hedgehog’s skin, but feet must be kept clean, wiping with a damp flannel can be used for this. A very soft toothbrush can be used to gently remove poo from under nails or to clean prickles.

Hedgehog baths should be baby bath temperature- this can be checked using a bath thermometer or by dipping an elbow into the water.

Water should be shallow so that the hedgehog does not get a wet nose. Placing a face flannel in the bottom of the sink or bowl makes the sink less slippery.

A hand or small plastic cup can be used to scoop water over the hedgehog’s back and avoid wetting the face, nose and ears. Ensuring the hedgehog is rinsed off in warm water so no residue remains is important.

Wrapping the hedgehog in a nice warm towel after their bath can be used to bond with the owner but also is important to prevent hibernation.

An alternative bathing method is a very, very shallow bath for the hedgehog to run around in. This method is useful to get rid of “poo boots” (feet with stuck on poo from running on the wheel).

A light spray of DermaPet Malcaceotic Spray Conditioner or hypocare spray on parted prickles can be given after a bath for dry skin and daily as needed if skin is dry.

Common bathing products include:

- Aveeno Bath Oil
- Raw Organic Coconut Oil
- Collodial Oats in muslin / tea strainer.
- Hypocare Spray or DermaPet Malcaceotic Spray Conditioner.

**Ear Care**

Many hogs get “tatty ears”, this is often a wax build up. Clean ears by gently wiping with a cloth. Massaging a tiny spec of coconut oil or Vaseline into each ear edge will moisturise the ears and prevent them becoming dry and tatty.

If you believe there’s an infection please seek vet treatment.
Part 7

About The Community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this care guide, we hope it helps you and your hedgehog.

The African Pygmy Hedgehog Club UK is the largest UK hedgehog community sitting just over 12,000 members as of March 2019. We started in 2012.

Our goal is to help guide owners and breeders to keep their hedgehogs ethically.

For most owners this means keeping in a safe environment, providing a good varied, stable diet and providing care as and when needed.

For breeders this means not over breeding, not inbreeding and reporting health issues so that they can be traced and monitored for genetic factors in later generations.

We encourage anyone with health issues in their hedgehog to report it to the Club registry so that we can keep notes on common illnesses in the UK hedgehog population. As well as monitor lifespan and so on.

https://hedgehogregistry.co.uk/

Or you can email aphclubuk@gmail.com to discuss health related issues.

Shows

Every year we host a show, sometimes two. We try to poll our members to find out which areas have the most members to try to suit as many people as possible.

Your hedgehog doesn't have to be registered to come to a hedgehog show. We have official classes and some more fun classes (fastest meal worm eater and so on).

Shows are a great place to meet people and of course, cuddle hedgehogs.

We typically announce shows on our group and page so if you are on there you'll likely see when we have shows.

We would like to invite you to join us on our other platforms:

Website : https://africanpygmyhedgehogclub.co.uk/

Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/africanpygmyhedgehogclubuk/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/hedgehogclubuk/

Twitter: https://twitter.com/HedgehogClubUK

Again thank you for reading and we look forward to seeing you around.