

# African Pygmy Hedgehog

## General Guideline:

Revision 10 (2024)



## Awesome Krimpvarkies

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## Hedgehogs:

The domesticated pet African Pygmy is related to the *Atelerix Albiventris* and goes under the same name; however, the modern-day pet hedgehog is more related to the *Atelerix Albiventris* and the Somali hedgehog *Atelerix Sclateri*. Meaning, the African Pygmy hedgehogs we own as pets are a man-made, cross bred species, never lived in the wild. Born and raised in captivity. Because of genetic compilation and appearances, our pet hedgehogs are called the same name.

Please note that the original pure species of African Pygmy hedgehogs still exist and can be found living free in Central and West Africa.

**Size:** Adult size: is 17 to 20 cm and adults weigh up to 500 grams

**Diet:** Omnivorous: Dry cat food as staple diet with vegetables, fruits, meats and added treats to their main diet.

**Sexual Maturity:** Males from 7 weeks on, Females 2 months, females are induced ovulated and are withheld by owners from mating until 6 months of age for health benefits. Induced ovulators means if you place the female with the male, she comes on heat immediately.

**Gestation:** 35-38 days

**Life Span:** Approximately 5 -7 years

**Behavior:** Nocturnal

Your pet should be kept **indoors** at normal room temperature (23-25 degrees). Hedgehogs is nocturnal and is very active in the night. They are very curious little animals and will inspect any new thing you put in their cage. They are very territorial and prefer to be alone. **Do not keep your hedgehog together with another in 1 cage. Cage sharing can never be justified. They are solitary in nature.** Your pet hedgehog can never be set free as he / she will surely die, they don't have that ability anymore to survive in the wild.

## Other species in South Africa:

South Africa do have an indigenous hedgehog species, the Southern African Hedgehog (*Atelerix Frontalis*). They are protected and **not allowed to be kept as pets**. These hedgehogs are living wild and mostly appears in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Northwest, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Limpopo and the Free State. It is rare to see them in KZN or Western Cape. They are also found in surrounding countries like Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe.



Southern African Hedgehog



Madagascar Lesser Tenrec

Madagascar Lesser Tenrecs can also be found in South Africa and are often confused as a hedgehog. They are not hedgehogs and not even related to hedgehogs. It is important to know the differences between these species as to what is allowed to keep as a pet, and what not, and obviously, care taking methods are different.

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## Permits:

In which provinces is it legal to keep an African Pygmy Hedgehog as a pet? If you are in a province that requires a permit, please apply at your nearest Department of Nature's offices. Natal can be done via email.

Mpumalanga	No permit required
Gauteng	No permit required
Limpopo	No permit required
Northwest	No permit required
Western Cape	Illegal to keep
Free state	Illegal to keep
Northern Cape	Require a permit
Natal	Require a permit
Eastern Cape	Require a permit

## Feeding:

Prescribed by the South Africa's Hedgehog Breeders Association.

List of Dry Cat Foods: 2023. Please note that the dry cat food list can change due to new products on the markets, or brands changing their recipe's.

Brand Name	Where to buy	Average Price	Fat	Protein
Montego Classic Kitten Chicken	Pet Shops /Vets / Takealot	1 kg – R85- R115 3 Kg - R195- R250	13%	32%
Feline Cuisine for Adult cats (Chicken and Rice Flavour)	Checkers / Pick & Pay /Spar / OK Foods Pet shops	2 kg – R155 – R269 4 kg - R319 -	12%	34%
Montego Adult Chicken	Pet Shops / Vets /Takealot	1 kg- R85- R115 3kg- R220- R250	12%	30%
Hills Hairball Indoor	Pet Shops / Vets / Takealot	2.5 kg – R 306- R435	8.5%	33.9%
Hills Science Sterilized Cat	Pet Shops / Vets / Takealot	1 kg – R350	9.9%	31.9%
Nutribyte Adult Cat	Online/ Petzone/ Catbox Hyper	1.5 kg- R135 5 kg – R340	14%	30%

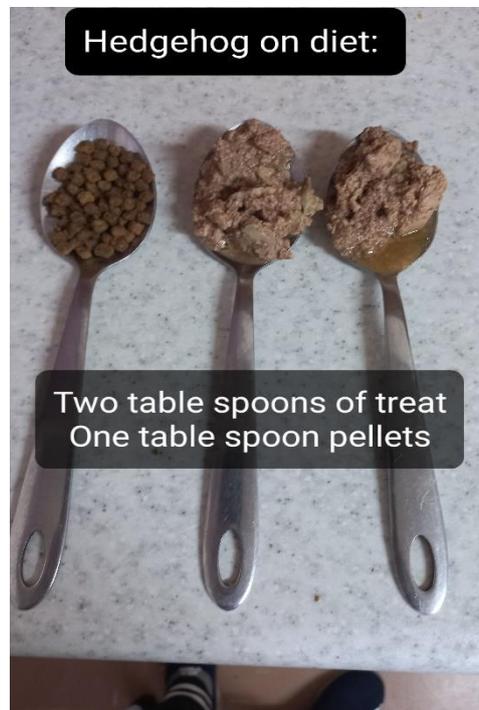
**Dry Cat food that shall never make it to the “safe” list is:** Catmor, Waggies, Epol, Ideal, Pro-balance, Monty & Me. These types of supermarket cat foods contain too many cereals, grains, and most often fish derivatives, colourants to be of a healthy diet to your hedgehog. Dry cat food such as Catmor and Whiskas are known for causing kidney related issues with cats and therefore can be really harmful to your hedgehog if being fed on a long-term basis. **This is not negotiable.**

#### Treats list:

Treats consist of meats and vegetables, fruits added to their dry food diet for a healthy balance. If hedgehogs get a balanced diet of dry food and soft food (treats) it will promote dental health and overall improvement on health and immune system. The dry food helps keep their teeth clean and sharp, but too hard pellets can dull and crack their teeth.

If you only offer soft food, that can lead to tooth rot and dental decay. Important to know is when your hedgehog is old or perhaps already lost some teeth, that it is okay to feed soft food only. But, in such a case it is better then to soften the pellets with water. They need the dry pellets to get in all the nutrients they need. For those reasons, other foods are regarded as treats. Too many of certain treats can also contribute to weight gain.

- Wet cat food (Royal Canine, Whiskers, Pampers etc.) no more than a spoon full at a time. Preferable chicken or duck flavour. Whiskas the best as it is salt free.
- Boiled eggs / Scramble eggs – no milk or spices added
- Cooked chicken (no oily skin or spices).
- Crickets, Silkworms, Dubia Roaches, Black Soldier Larvae, Mealworms-**limited 4 a week. Limit the intake of insects to avoid calcium imbalances- Metabolic Bone Disease.**
- Vegetables and fruit (cooked vegetables without spices). It is important to cook and mash up vegetables.
- Avoid fish-based foods, or any fish. No milk!



30 ml of dry cat pellets are enough food for an adult hedgehog.



# Basic food list :



**Note : This food list only includes foods that are well known. Please ask if you would like our complete food list documents. These foods should only be given as TREATS ( 2 tablespoons of catfood and 1 tablespoon treats - daily). Do not use any milk , salt or spices.**

<u>Fruit</u>	<u>Vegetables</u>	<u>Meat</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Apple</li> <li> Appricot</li> <li> Banana</li> <li> Berries</li> <li> Cantaloupe</li> <li> Mango</li> <li> Watermelon</li> <li> Peach</li> <li> Pears</li> <li> Paw Paw</li> <li> Plums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Beetroot</li> <li> Brocoli - Cooked</li> <li> Cauliflower - Cooked</li> <li> Bell Pepper</li> <li> Corn - Cooked</li> <li> Cucumber</li> <li> Carrots</li> <li> Green Beans</li> <li> Leafy greens</li> <li> Peas - Cooked</li> <li> Pumpkin - Cooked</li> <li> Sweet Potato - Cooked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Chicken - Cooked</li> <li> Duck - Cooked</li> <li> Lamb - Cooked</li> <li> Beef - Cooked</li> <li> Mince meat - Cooked</li> <li> Pork - Cooked</li> <li> Turkey - Cooked</li> </ul>

<u>Herbs</u>	<u>Snacks</u>	<u>DANGEROUS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Mint</li> <li> Parsley</li> <li> Coriander / Cilantro</li> <li> Dandelion</li> <li> Clover</li> <li> Rosemary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Mealworms - 3to5 a week</li> <li> Purity - No milk , pasta or rice</li> <li> Wet Catfood Satches - No fish</li> <li> Tofu - Small amount</li> <li> Cottage cheese - Small Amount</li> <li> Natural Yogurt - Small amount , special treat</li> <li> Cooked eggs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mushrooms</li> <li>• Raw eggs</li> <li>• Raw meat</li> <li>• Onions</li> <li>• Grapes</li> <li>• Basil</li> <li>• Avocado</li> <li>• Citrusfruits</li> <li>• Chocolate</li> <li>• Cinnamon</li> <li>• Dried fruits</li> <li>• Dairy products</li> <li>• Fish</li> <li>• Garlic</li> <li>• Pineapple</li> <li>• Nuts + seeds</li> <li>• Tomato</li> <li>• Processed foods</li> <li>• Raw potatoes</li> </ul> 

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## Hedgehogs that require special diets:

In the case of a hedgehog that is underweight or overweight, you as owner needs to adjust the diet to rectify the weight problem. In the case of a sickly underweight hedgehog, it is always good to provide food that are high in calories as well as proteins such as:

Royal Canine Mother and Baby Mousse tin food, eggs, meat (Chicken livers, chicken, beef, mincemeat).

For an overweight hedgehog you need to monitor calorie intake.

Normal hedgehog: requires 70- 100 cal.

Underweight hedgehog: requires 100 cal.

Overweight hedgehog: requires less than 70 cal.

See calorie lists from SAHBA and note that this were calculated as per tablespoon.



# SAFE TREATS

## Calories list

As per tablespoon

**FRUIT :**

apple	5.35 cal
apricot	4.65 cal
banana	12.71 cal
mixed berries	4.71 cal
cantaloupe	3.12 cal
mango	5.82 cal
watermelon	2.65 cal
peach	3.85 cal
pears	5.53 cal
pawpaw	3.64 cal
plums	4.47 cal

\* hedgehogs needs 70 - 100 calories per day

### CAT KIBBLE

Montego kitten chicken	21,58 cal
Montego Adult chicken	17.65 cal
Feline Cuisine for adult cats	11.77 cal
Hills Hairball Indoor	18.47 cal
Hills Science Sterilised Cat	21 cal
Nutribyte Adult Cat	17.65 cal

\*\*\* special care\*\*\*  
(lactating mother, underweight hedgie)

Royal Canin Mother and Baby	28.47 cal
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### CAT WET FOOD

Pampers	19.5 cal
Whiskas	25.66 cal
Feline Cuisine	25.66 cal
Montego Kitten	9 cal



**VEGETABLES :**

Beetroot	7.18 cal
Broccoli	2 cal
Cauliflower	1.76 cal
Bell Pepper	1.77 cal
corn	3.82 cal
Cucumber	0.94 cal
Carrots	2.65 cal
Green Beans	2.59 cal
Leafy Greens	2.65 cal
Peas	6.47 cal
Pumpkin	2.94 cal
Sweet potato	10.59 cal
Cabbage	5.41 cal

**MEAT :**

Chicken	19.7 cal
Duck	27.76 cal
Beef	5.76 cal
Lamb	23 cal
Minced meat	26.43 cal
Pork	18.29 cal
Turkey	14.82 cal
Chicken liver (44g)	36.5 cal

**INSECTS :**

Mealworms	0.14 cal
Superworms	0.05 cal
Crickets	0.13 cal
Black Fly Soldier	
Larvae	2.6 cal
Dubai Roaches	0.66 cal
Silkworms	0.77 cal

**SNACKS :**

\*\*\* Per occasion not  
daily even not  
weekly\*\*\*

Tofu -1/4 teaspoon	2.69 cal
Cottage cheese - 1/4 teaspoon	3.2 cal
Natural Yogurt - 1/4 teaspoon	2.19 cal
1/2 egg (weekly)	40 cal



## Housing:

A hedgehog needs a cage with good ventilation (**a "fish" tank is not recommended**). Poor ventilation and the ammonia build up from urine are the 2 reasons why hog owners are told not to use aquariums.

They need bedding in their cage, a house / sleeping den, water bottle, food bowl, heat source, and a running wheel for exercise to keep them healthy.

I recommend a running wheel that have a solid floor. Hamster wheel is **not** suitable, as the gaps in the wheel might cause them to hang themselves if their feet got caught in the grids, or worse injure themselves. Wheel size 28-30 cm in diameter. The right size is crucial to avoid back injuries.

You will need additional **heating sources** in the winter to keep them warm, like a heat emitter lamp or heating-pad. You can even throw a blanket over their cage if it is cold. A warm water sack will also help if you do not have other resources, as long as it has a cover on to prevent your hedgy from burns. The same for the heating pad, heating pads to be underneath sleeping den, otherwise your hedgehog can burn. Best advice is to place a ceramic tile on top of heat pad.

Drinking Water bottles must be the ones with a ball valve, not the type that is spring loaded. Spring loaded bottles can amputate their tongues. Water bottles work great, as you may find that your hedgehog will turn over water bowls during the night and mess up everything. They love doing that!!! Unless if you can afford ceramic water bowls that is very heavy. They are unfortunately expensive.

Toys for your hedgehog consists of any soft cat toys, a ping pong ball and cut open toilet rolls. Avoid cat toys that contains catnip.

Cages varies from homemade to rabbit cages bought from pet shops or hedgehog cages bought from breeders. Size of the cage not smaller than **100 cm x 50 cm x 50 cm**. Ideal length is 1.2 meters. Avoid using secondhand reptile cages as animals such as bearded dragons and certain snakes leaves a chemical compound behind that causes stress and respiratory issues for hedgehogs. Hedgehogs and snakes are natural enemies, and your hedgehog can be stressed out by the smell of the snake lingering in the cage. If you do use a new reptile cage, replace one glass panel with mesh to ensure proper ventilation. DIY wooden cages must be treated with lead free paint or a wood sealer to avoid becoming smelly after a while as the water and urine can be absorbed in wood.

## Types of bedding:

**Bedding types:** Cat litter, bio-compressed pellets, yoga carpets, industrial carpets, or fleece blankets. Breeders have different opinions on bedding. **Bedding must never be soggy or wet.**

I have tried and tested all off these options, and here are my findings:

- 1) **Compressed Eco pellets:** This work very well indeed and is much cleaner. Negative point is that it is expensive, and not always available. Compressed pellets cause for a nice clean smell that other materials lack of. I am using this currently in my litter boxes. Litter boxes to be cleaned weekly, if it is covering your cage floor, regular scooping up of poop and topping up as required, you should then only be needed to replace once a month.
- 2) **Cat litter:** It must be the traditional type (grey) and **not the crystal type**, as it will burn your hedgy`s skin. If you use cat litter, just scoop up the poo regularly. You might find that cat litter last longer than other materials. As you scoop up the poo, you may need to top up a bit if needed. It should be changed at least once a month. Dust is a common complaint, and some owners experienced that the litter could get stuck in the male`s penis shafts.
- 3) **Cage liners:** Cage liners made from fleece with a foam inner works great, if you hedgehog is potty trained. The foam inside is absorbent and protects the bottom of your cage against water damage. If dirty on the one side, it can be shaken out and turned over, and after both sides are dirty, it can be washed in a washing machine. Please Take note of poop and quills ending up in your washing machine. Your hedgehog feet will be much more dirtier with fleece than what it would be in cat litter.
- 4) **Carpets:** Carpets works great in terms of protecting cage floors. The Yoga carpets are easy cleaning. It can be hosed down or just lightly scrubbed with a brush. Risks here is that when taken out and washed and it is not properly dry, it can cause for fungus or mold to start growing underneath the carpet. Industrial carpets are also popular to use. Ensure that there are no fibers that can hook on the hedgehog`s nails, and the same risks apply in terms of fungus.

### **Avoid:**

Wood shavings (It is just a host for mites)

Natural grass (Causes eye injuries and eye infections)

Fake grass (It becomes so smelly after a period of time, also big risk for fungal infections as it traps moisture at the bottom).

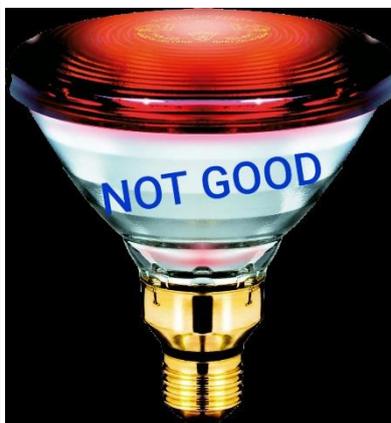
Newspaper (it is not absorbing and causes for fungal infections)

Examples of typical hedgehog cages and wheels, and other required items



Wooden cages with proper ventilation. See pictures below of recommended safe wheels.





## Bonding:

When you take your new hedgehog home, spent a lot of time with him / her the first 3-4 weeks. You form your own hedgehog's personality by spending time with him or her. Smell is their best sense they have, to get used to you. You will notice that your hedgehog anoints a lot with new smells and tastes. Anointing is when they form saliva in their mouth and rubs it into their quills. They do this as part of a memory process, and they also do this with smells and tastes that they enjoy.

Use an old unwashed T-shirt as a carry bag / bonding pouch to carry around your hedgehog. He or she would then get used to your smell. Be patient with your baby hedgehog, as he will be now alone for the first time of his life, and also in a strange environment. Always talk to your hedgehog whenever you are near his cage or when handling him, so that he can get used to your voice. Avoid bright lights and loud noises when bonding with your hedgehog.

Baby hedgehogs need quite a bit of sleep the first month after they come home with you, so don't be too concerned if he sleeps a lot at first. They would also be of the age (6 weeks old) of quilling. This would last for almost a month, and they would lose their baby spikes. Quilling can be very painful for them and cause grumpiness. No don't give up with the bonding, just change your handling techniques, instead of stroking over the quills, rather let the hedgehog just roam your lap, bed, couch, or designated area where you spend time with him. Avoid stroking or touching their quills if they have difficulty with shedding quills. Around the age of 6 months, they do shed quills for a last time. It is possible that some hedgehogs may quill for longer periods than other hedgehogs. Think of this as a human baby that is teething. The big difference here is that they will have to shed around 5000 quills!

## Bathing:

Bathing your hedgehog; Do not bath your hedgehog too often, as it can dry out his skin. No more than twice a month.

### How to bath a hedgehog:

Simply put luke-warm water in your wash basin or a small dish, add your shampoo and linseed or coconut oil (if you do use it), use a soft brush like an old toothbrush to gently brush off the hedgehog, in downward movements. Rinse of all shampoo and oil with clean water, this is to prevent clogging of pores. **Never use any scented shampoos or oils!!**

**Traditional Bath-** Johnsons Baby Shampoo No More Tears with a bit of coconut / linseed oil. Rinse off with clean water after bathing.

**Oatmeal Bath-** Place a handful of dry oats in an old sock and let it steep until bathwater is milky- This is like a spa treatment for an itchy hedgehog during quilling- no need to rinse of

**Rooibos Tea Bath-** Steep 3 or 4 Rooibos Tea Bags in bathwater and wash hedgehog in it. It is a natural way of bathing, cheap, also has anti-inflammatory properties – no need to rinse of

**Betadine Bath-** Use half a teaspoon of betadine dissolved in bath water to bath hedgehog in. This is for minor injuries, relieve of itchiness from mites, relief for mild skin eczema.

### Hedgehog bath products:

Johnson's Baby Shampoo, Tear free.

Aveeno Baby Oatmeal Wash

Oatmeal Bath (handful of oats in a sock, leave sock in water until milky) This is good for a quilling hedgehog.

Rooibos-tea bath (simply add a few rooibos teabags to water)

Coconut oil – mix with shampoo.

Linseed oil – recommended oil to add with shampoo.

Nail Clipper

Soft Brush

Bath time can be used as a good opportunity to trim your hedgehogs' nails. I bath my hedgehogs if needed, (average every two weeks) and trim their nails while bathing them. This can be done with a normal human nail clipper, just as you clip your own nails... just trickier as they do not like this! Not all hedgehogs appreciate a bath, however in summer they love to cool off in a bit of water. When hedgehogs are overheating, they will lay flat on their stomach in order to cool down. When your hedgy is doing that, you can cool him down with water. Do not put a fan or air con directly on the hedgehog, especially when they wet, they can catch easily pneumonia. **IMPORTANT:** Always rinse hedgehog with clean water after a bath with shampoo and oil (linseed or coconut) This is to prevent clogging of pores.



## Health:

- **Mites:** Hedgehogs can suffer from tiny mites that can cause serious skin irritation, but you are unlikely to encounter fleas on them. Repeated scratching and soreness are typical signs of the presence of mites, if not sure, seek veterinary advice to obtain a confirmative diagnosis and safe treatment. Recommended product: Revolution for kittens or Broadline for kittens.
- **Obesity** is a common problem in adult hedgehogs and may lead to inactivity, metabolic derangements, and health problems. A wheel is a good cure for an obese hedgehog.
- **Fatty Liver Disease-** This is very often linked to obesity and diabetes. Incorrect diet is the most common cause
- **Diabetes-** Also can be linked to Fatty liver disease and obesity.
- **Hibernation** can be deadly for an African Pygmy Hedgehog. They cannot hibernate like the indigenous South African Hedgehog. When an African Pygmy goes into hibernation their organs shut down and they can die in 3 days' time. There-fore it is very important to keep their room temperatures constant and warm.
- **Some respiratory pathogens** have included *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and *Pasteurella multocida*. Clinical signs may include dyspnoea, nasal discharge, and/or sneezing. Predisposing factors for upper and lower respiratory tract infection include sub-optimal environmental temperature, dusty or unsanitary bedding, malnutrition, concurrent disease and other causes of immune compromised. For this you need antibiotics.
- **Intestinal parasites ("worms" and protozoa).** De-wormer for kittens can be used. Be sure of the right measurements according to weight. Product recommended: Milbemax for kittens / Broadline For kittens / revolution for kittens.
- **Dry Skin** – can be cured by a few drops of Vitamin e / Coconut / Linseed oil in his bath water.
- **Infections-** intestine-infection, urinary infection, wound infections, all requires vet treatment (bloody stools etc)
- **Cancer** – hedgehogs are prone to get cancer as they age. Cancer can be any type of cancer.
- **Metabolic Bone Disease** – Imbalances of calcium intake. This can be deadly if not be cautious regarding diets. Follow prescribed diet to avoid risks.
- **Vet`s advice to be obtained when conditions look serious.**
- See our website for more detail on diseases, [www.awesomekrimparkies.com](http://www.awesomekrimparkies.com)

### Basic List of supplements / products for hedgehogs:

- 1) Brunel Vitamin Syrup – Vitamins- Immune booster / improve appetite. Can be bought at Checkers or chemists. Mix ½ teaspoon on 500 ml water. Give this mixture for 7 days as drinking water, skip one week and repeat.
- 2) Protexin- Probiotic – Good for sick/ recovering hedgehogs/ pregnant females/ females with babies. Can be bought at pet shops or vets. Tip of a knife point over food daily for 7 days, skip 7 days and repeat.
- 3) Linseed oil- Dry Skin- can be bought at chemists. Mix 25% linseed oil on 75% baby shampoo
- 4) Revolution for Kittens- mites and worms – Pet shops & Vets. One drop behind the head, repeat after 3 weeks.
- 5) Broadline for Kittens- mites and worms- Pet shops, Vets. Half a tube drop-on, repeat after 3 weeks
- 6) Dewormer – Milbemax for Kittens – Pet shops, vets. Crush half the tablet, mix with water and give with a syringe. Repeat after 3 weeks with the other half of tablet.
- 7) F10 Barrier Cream- wound treatment – Pet shops and vets
- 8) Virbac Vitabest- Vitamin syrup- Pet shops and vets



## More on health...

# HEDGEHOG'S POOP CHART



[ Dark brown to brown ]  
Can be solid, can be paste-like texture

Perfectly healthy



[ Greenish brown to neon green ]  
paste-like texture  
stress because new home, new food, new environment

Stress



[ Greenish brown to neon green ]  
loose-watery texture  
intestinal parasite (worm & bacteria)

Diarrhea



Constipation



[ Greenish brown to neon green ]  
Sticky-mucus texture  
could be stress (new food) or bacterial infection : clostridium.

Green Slimey Poop



[ Red to black ]  
?? texture  
Internal bleeding near gastrointestinal tract

Bloody Poop

Typical Hedgehog Fluid Intake Per Day	
HeavenlyHedgies.com	
Weight (oz/g)	Daily Water (tsp/ml)
2 oz / 50 g	0.5 tsp / 2.5 ml
3.5 oz / 100 g	1.0 tsp / 5 ml
5 oz / 150 g	1.5 tsp / 7.5 ml
7 oz / 200 g	2.0 tsp / 10 ml
9 oz / 250 g	2.5 tsp / 12.5 ml
11 oz / 300 g	3 tsp / 15 ml
12 oz / 350 g	3.5 tsp / 17.5 ml
14 oz / 400 g	4 tsp / 20 ml
16 oz / 450 g	4.5 tsp / 22.5 ml
8 oz / 500 g	5 tsp / 25 ml
19 oz / 550 g	5.5 tsp / 27.5 ml
21 oz / 600 g	6 tsp / 30 ml
23 oz / 650 g	6.5 tsp / 32.5 ml
25 oz / 700 g	7 tsp / 35 ml
27 oz / 750 g	7.5 tsp / 37.5 ml
29 oz / 800 g	8 tsp / 40 ml

## A Quick Guide To Hedgehog Noises:

1. Grunting and snuffing, like a pig = hedgehog out and about, looking for food.
2. Chuffing like a steam train = mating season.
3. Chirping like a baby bird = hungry hoglets in the nest.
4. Screaming Hedgehog = in pain and distress.
5. Hissing Hedgehog = warning sign – keep away!
6. Clicking and “popping” Hedgehog = challenge, often to other males in mating season.



## Hedgehog Body Language



**CHIRRP**  
**EXPLORING**  
elongated body,  
flat spines



**TWITCH TWITCH**  
**INTRIGUED**  
approaching with  
twitching nose



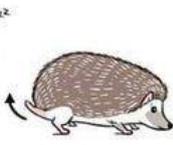
**INTERESTED**  
licking nose when smelling  
or tasting something yummy



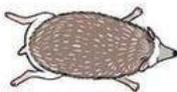
**RELAXED**  
flat spines



**SLEEPING, COMFORTABLE**



**ABOUT TO POOP**  
tail up



**SPLOOTING**  
on the ground:  
too warm, uncomfortable  
on you: relaxed



**UNSURE**  
head lowered,  
looking away



**FURROWED BROW**  
raised forehead spines,  
eyes covered: scared



**BALLING UP**  
on the ground or in a hand:  
unstable, unsafe



**BALLED UP**  
feet on the ground:  
extremely scared



**SPIKES UP**  
needing space



**CHIRPING SOUNDS**  
happy, interested



**HUFFING, PUFFING SOUNDS**  
waking up, or  
adjusting to their space



**HISSING/POPPING SOUNDS**  
extremely distressed

## Breeding:

**When breeding with hedgehog`s it is important to ensure that you have a market available before attempting breeding. It is your responsibility as breeder to ensure that your babies go to a good home. Ensure that you can proof that the hedgehogs you are breeding with are free of any genetically carried over diseases.**

- Females must be 6 months of age for first time mating, to avoid underage breeding. Also, important to know if a female is older than one year of age and was never mated, that you cannot risk breeding with her as their pelvic bones grows together (fuse) and cause for difficulties when giving birth. Ethical breeders do not breed with a female after the age of 2 and a half years to prolong the female`s life. As well it is recommended not allow for more than 4 litters in a female`s lifespan between the ages of 6 months and 2 and a half year. It is recommended to give them a rest period of 5 to 6 months between litters. Having planned winter babies is unethical breeding.
- Always keep your males and females separate, hedgehogs do have seasonal heat periods, but comes immediately in heat when in contact with a male. Otherwise, you will have nonstop babies, shortening your female`s lifespan.
- Make sure you know the history of your hedgehogs, example; you cannot use a hedgehog that have history of genetically carried over diseases. It is important to keep record of your hedgehog`s gene pool.
- If the male is left with the female, both of them might turn on the babies and eat them.
- Pregnancy duration is around 35 – 38 days. Mark your calendar on when you can expect babies.
- Always put the female in the male`s cage, it will give him a bit of confidence to “perform” better. After around 5 days, you can put the female back in her own cage. Then repeat it after a week, to ensure that the mating was successful.
- When the male and female got together, they will chase one another around. (To prevent injuries, remove all objects in cage besides water, food and sleeping box). They will chirp and make a lot of noise, which is all part of the courting ritual. When the female is finally ready, she will lay down with her quills flat and the male can do his job.
- From at least 2-3 days before the expected birth date, refrain from cleaning out the cage. Keep strangers away from your hedgehog cage, as any kind of loud noises and strange smells (dogs etc) can results in the female abandoning her babies or eat them.
- When the female come out of her nest after giving birth, you can use the opportunity to have quick peek to count the babies. Scoop dead babies up with a spoon, do not touch her blankets or the babies at all.
- Keep all strangers away from your cage. Hedgehogs have a very sensitive sense of smell, and it might upset the new mom.
- When the babies are 2 weeks old, you can start taking them out on a daily basis for a few short minutes. Pick them up, and when they uncurl in your hand, put them back. This will ensure that the babies are getting used to human handling. A Good mother will allow you within the first week to look and handle her babies, only do this when you are an experienced breeder and have a good bond with their mother.
- From 5 weeks old the mom will start weaning them, as they can eat on their own at this stage.
- At 6 weeks you can take the babies away. Remember not to keep the youngsters together in one cage, as they can mate as from young as 7-8 weeks! This is not recommended because of their young age; they can die during birth or have growth abnormalities.

**IMPORTANT: Do not breed with a temperamental / moody hedgehog. The babies will inherit their mother`s bad temperament and the little ones will be replicas of their moody mother! This is fascinating and true. If you have a friendly female, you will have friendly babies! This behaviour is transfer genetically and behavioural: The mother huffs and puffs when you at her cage and the babies learn that association with humans.**

## KNOW YOUR HEDGEHOG`S AGE:

Hedgehog Age in Calendar Years	Equivalent Human Years
2 months	10 years
6 months	20 years
14 months	30 years
3 years	40 years
3 years and six months	50 years
3 years and 8 months	60 years
4 years and 2 months	70 years
5 years and 4 months	80 years
6 years and 2 months	90 years
7 years and 8 months	100 years

A 5-year-old hedgehog is about 76 in people years, so if your hedgehog lives 5-7 years it has lived a full life, but five years is longer than the national average.

## Colours:

Although some colour charts indicate over 100 different colours, it is mainly just shades or dilutions from the primary colours. Because there are too many colours, just the primary ones are captured in this Guideline. For the complete Colour Chart of South Africa, you can find it on the South Africa`s Hedgehogs Breeders Association or visit the Awesome Krimpvarkies website.

**Primary base colours consist of: Standard, Black, Grey, Brown, Chocolate.**

Cinnamons, Cinnicots and Apricots are a dilutes form from the primary colours, and therefore not counted as primary colours.

What makes hedgehogs colours further-more interesting is facial markings and body patterns, such as Pinto.

Please note that Albino`s are NOT a colour. Albino is a genetically carried over skin pigmentation disorder, where the animal`s real colour is lacking the pigmentation to show his real colour.

### Standard:

Standard is the original colour of African Pygmy hedgehogs. Their base colour. Sometimes called **Salt & Pepper** or **Dark Grey**, but best described as Standard, as it is what it is, a standard colour.



**Black:**

Black is caused by eumelanin pigmentation that causes skin and quills to be dark. This is a dominant genetic trait.



Photo features a Standard carrying for Black- bred by Awesome Krimpvarkies

**Grey:**

Grey is a diluted or faded form of the darker colour, Standard. Grey colours come`s in different hues / shades of grey.

Photo featuring a hedgehog bred by Awesome Krimpvarkies



**Chocolate:**

This can be described as a warm brown colour; hedgehogs colour continues to develop up until one year of age. Photo on the left featuring a hedgehog bred by Awesome Krimpvarkies

Chocolate



Medium Brown

**Brown:**

Brown colours comes in different shades of brown. Dark Brown, Medium Brown, Light Brown and Pale Brown, or Dilute Brown. Photo righthand side featuring a Medium Brown hedgehog from Awesome Krimpvarkies

**Cinnamon:**

Cinnamons have a brown-orange appearance. This colour can also come in different shades, but very subtle shades. For those reasons we don't have a "dark or light" cinnamon.

Cinnamon Hedgehog bred by Awesome Krimpvarkies



Albino hedgehog bred by Awesome Krimpvarkies

**Albino:**

Not an actual colour, but a skin disorder. White to creamy yellow with bright red eyes. Photo top right.

**Pinto:**

Pinto is a body pattern, not a colour, also called Piebald's. Pinto's can be in any colour and are classified first by their pattern and then the colour of the coloured quills. Patterns are classified as: High Pinto, Low Pinto, Medium Pinto, Reversed Pinto and Full Reversed Pinto.



Photo top left featuring a Full Reversed Black Eyed Pinto. Bred by Awesome KrimpvarKies



Photo top right featuring a Medium Black Pinto. Bred by Awesome KrimpvarKies

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### Contact numbers you might need:

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Hedgehogs, hedgehog supplies and cages (on order only)
- 2) Dr Elliot – Onderstepoort 012 529 8105 -Gauteng
- 3) Nelspruit Animal Hospital – 013 752 8271 – Mpumalanga
- 4) Langenhoven Animal Clinic - 051 446 1324- Free State
- 5) Cape Exotic Animal Hospital – 021 975 0708- Cape Province

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