



# SOUTH AFRICA`s HEDGEHOG BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

## Hedgehog Species:

Lizl van Vreden, South Africa, January 2024, Second Edition

There are **19** hedgehog species world-wide. Hedgehogs are divided into **five subgroups** that include Eurasian hedgehogs (*Erinaceus*), African hedgehogs (*Atelerix* and *Paraechinus*), desert hedgehogs (*Hemiechinus*), and steppe hedgehogs (*Mesechinus*).

## African Hedgehogs: (*Atelerix* and *Paraechinus*)

### 1) African Pygmy- *Atelerix albiventris*

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

Diet: Insectivores-Omnivorous: insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion, and occasional plant matter

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.

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years in captivity

Range: Throughout Central Africa (world-wide domesticated pet)

Habitat: Open country with low growing vegetation

Status: Least concerned

**African Pygmy- *Atelerix albiventris*** comes from sub-Saharan Central Africa and inhabits savanna areas and crop fields. Their body is completely white, which emphasizes their dark head. The African Pygmy hedgehog has very short legs, it only has four toes on the back paws and five on their front paws. They are smaller than other hedgehogs, at about 20 cm (8 in) long. African Pygmy Hedgehogs can swim and climb, but don't see depth very well, and they can be quite noisy and active.

**This is the number one domesticated pet hedgehog around the world.** It was previously believed that the African Pygmy is a hybrid or crossbreed from the *Albiventris algirus*, because of their cheek patches and pigment on the stomach. That appears to be not true. Also, the African Pygmy has much more color mutations than the *Albiventris algirus*. Currently more research studies are in progress by Judith Bos from Netherlands. Until all studies are completed and proven, the thought remains that they might be a crossbreed, but more considered to be crossed with a subspecies or maybe *Ateleris sclateri* (Somali hedgehog). African Pygmies can grow up to 500 grams.



## 2) North African hedgehog- *Atelerix algirus*.

Size: Adult size: is 20 to 25 cm and adults weigh over 800 grams

Diet: Omnivorous: Insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion, fungus, plant matter, seeds.

Sexual Maturity: From 2 months old

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years

Range: Northern Region, Algeria, Morocco, Libia

Habitat: Mediterranean conifer

Status: Least concerned

**North African hedgehog - *Atelerix algirus*.** Rather large hedgehog, are almost double the size of *Atelerix albiventris*.

The North African hedgehog lives across North Africa, including Morocco and Algeria, and currently remains in the wild along the Mediterranean coast including Valencia and Catalonia invasively.-Their natural color can vary from light being to dark brown, mainly depending on the region. This species is also held in captivity in Europe and some parts of Asia, but is still very rarely seen.



- Northern African Hedgehog

## 2) Somali hedgehog- *Atelerix sclateri*

Size: Adult size: is 15 to 20 cm and adults weigh up to 500 grams

Diet: Insectivores: Insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion, and occasional plant matter

Sexual Maturity: Uncertain

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years

Range: Northern Region, Algeria, Morocco, Libia

Habitat: Grasslands, savannah and open fields

Status: Least concerned

**Somali hedgehog-** The Somali hedgehog *or Atelerix sclateri* are endemic to Somalia. It has a white belly, while its legs are usually black or brown. The Somali Hedgehog looks very similar to the African pygmy, but has more prominent cheek patches and have five toes on every paw. They are also known to naturally form crossbreeds in the areas where their habitats overlap, like in Kenya and parts of Somalia. Due to this, it is even debated whether or not true Somali hedgehogs still exist, due to the small habitat that they have. They've been exported from Somalia to Germany between 2005-2015 to contribute to African Pygmy breeding lines, but this has been stopped due to reproductive issues of the offspring. There however still are crossbred hedgehogs found within captivity in Europe.



- Somali Hedgehog

### 3) Southern African hedgehog- *Atelerix frontalis*

Size: Adult size: is 20 to 25 cm and adults weigh up to 1 kilogram

Diet: Insectivores, Insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion, and occasional plant matter

Sexual Maturity: From 1 year of age, normally after their first hibernation

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years

Range: Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe

Habitat: Grasslands, savannah and open fields

Status: Protected

**Southern African hedgehog – *Atelerix frontalis*** is a black - brownish hedgehog living in southern African countries like Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, among others.

While taking note of its black legs and overall brown tone, the Southern African hedgehog has a very distinctive white stripe on its forehead. Like most hedgehogs, the Southern African one hibernates and has an omnivorous diet mostly based on insects. It can sometimes look like an African Pygmy Hedgehog to people unaware of the differences, so when identifying the species within these countries, the amount of toes on the back paws should be a leading determination factor. The species is also protected in most areas, if not all, and thus is not to be held in captivity.



-Southern African Hedgehog

### 4) Desert hedgehog: *Paraechinus aethiopicus*

Size: Adult size: is 15 cm and adults weigh from 280 – 500gram

Diet: Carnivorous: Insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion.

Sexual Maturity: From 1 year of age, normally after their first hibernation

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years

Range: It is found in Bahrain, Algeria, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and possibly Ethiopia.

Habitat: Hot, dry deserts

Status: Protected

**Desert hedgehog-** The desert hedgehog or *Paraechinus aethiopicus* is particularly small - about 15 cm (6 in) long. The species is much more dominant and much less defensive than *Atelerix* species, as they tend to attack predators rather than ball up. Its colors vary between black markings and quills to light brown. It is found in the desert areas of North Africa and the Middle East. Their faces are much pointier and their ears are larger than *Atelerix* species. They're very rare in captivity, as their first exports to Europe, America and Asia has only happened first between 2015-2020. The status of them being kept as pets within Africa is unknown.



© Hans-Joachim - Desert Hedgehog

#### 5) **Brandt's hedgehog- *Paraechinus hypomelas***

Size: Adult size: 25 cm and adults weigh from 280 – 500gram

Diet: Omnivore: insects but also snails, snakes, toads, frogs, carrion, bird eggs, grass roots, mushrooms, melons, berries, and watermelons

Sexual Maturity: Unknown

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years (captivity research)

Range: Middle East and Central Asia

Habitat: Desert areas and mountains.

Status: Least concerned

**- Brandt's hedgehog -** Brandt's hedgehog or *Paraechinus hypomelas* measures about 25 cm (10 in) long and has large ears and a dark body. You can find it in parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen. It's a very rare species to encounter. The species is not being kept in captivity at this moment and it's very unlikely that this will happen in the coming few years.



Brandt's Hedgehog

#### 6) **Indian hedgehog- *Paraechinus micropus***

Size: Adult size: is 15, and adults weigh from 300 – 450gram

Diet: Carnivorous: insects but also snails, snakes, toads, frogs, carrion, bird eggs.

Sexual Maturity: Unknown

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years (captivity research) otherwise no data

Range: India and Pakistan

Habitat: Desert areas and dunes, scrub forests

Status: Least concerned

**Indian hedgehog-** The Indian hedgehog or *Paraechinus micropus* is native to India and Pakistan and has a patch or spot on its face like a raccoon's mask. It lives in high mountain areas where water is readily available. It measures about 15 cm (6 in) and is quite fast, but not as fast as the long-eared hedgehog. This hedgehog also has a varied diet that includes frogs and toads. This species is being kept as pets by people within their native habitat, but not in other parts of the world. They're protected mostly by locals and not by laws, making exports to other parts of the world very unlikely.



Indian Hedgehog

#### 7) **Bare-bellied hedgehog- *Pareachinus nudiventris***

Size: Adult size: is 25 cm and adults weigh up to 500grams

Diet: Insectivora: Insects, crustaceans, small vertebrates, eggs, carrion.

Sexual Maturity: From 10 months of age

Life Span: Approximately 5 -7 years

Range: India

Habitat: Dry, scrubby areas

Status: Vulnerable

**Bare-bellied hedgehog- Bare-bellied or *Pareachinus nudiventris*.** These hedgehogs were to believed extinct, but recently they've been rediscovered. The species is very rare and due to their near extinct status, they're not to be kept as pets nor exported to captivity.



Bare-bellied

## Desert Hedgehogs: (Hemiechinus)

### 1) Long-eared hedgehog- *Hemiechinus auritus*

Size: 250-400gram, 12-27cm

Diet: Omnivorous: mainly insectivores as 70% of their diet consist of insects. They also eat beetles, caterpillars, earthworms, bird eggs, mammal meat, slugs and snails, millipedes, earwigs, bees, bird meat, plants. They may even eat snakes

Sexual Maturity: Around 10 months

Life Span: 7.6 years

Range: Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and some arid areas of East Asia

Habitat: dry steppes, semi-deserts, and deserts

Status: Least Concern

**Long-eared hedgehog-** The long-eared hedgehog or *Hemiechinus auritus*. Also called Egyptian Long-ear. The long-eared hedgehog is native to the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and some arid areas of East Asia; it has a very wide range, but it always prefers moderate climates. The long-eared hedgehog is notorious because of its long ears and short spikes, rather than curling up into a ball as a form of defense, its known to use its quills to attack a predator. It is really fast, much more than any other hedgehog species and very dominantly aggressive by nature. The species is very popular as pets, though less known then the African Pygmy Hedgehog due to its character.



Long-eared or Egyption Long-ear

### 2) Indian long-eared hedgehog- *Hemiechinus collaris*

Size: Up to 500 gram, 20 cm

Diet: Insectivores: Insects

Sexual Maturity: Around 8 months

Life Span: 6.8 years (in captivity)

Range: Pakistan and India

Habitat: Desert areas

Status: Threatened

**Indian long-eared hedgehog-** Indian long-eared hedgehog or *Hemiechinus collaris* is very different than the Egyptian Long-ear. It inhabits the arid regions of Pakistan and Northwestern India. It is relatively small and has dark colors. It is interesting to note that this hedgehog performs a ritual dance to impress the female over more than one day. Character wise they're similar to the Long-eared hedgehog by attacking its predator rather than being defensive. The species is not being kept as pets, as they're a protected species in most of their habitat and also highly protected by locals.



Indian Long ear

## European Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus*)

### 1) European hedgehog- *Erinaceus europaeus*

Size: Up 2 kg, 25- 35cm

Diet: Omnivores: slugs, millipedes, earthworms, beetles, caterpillars and other insects, as well as supplementary fruits and mushrooms, grassroots and berries.

Sexual Maturity: Around 8 months

Life Span: Expected 10 years.

Range: Europe- Italy, Spain, England, France.

Habitat: Woodland edges, hedgerows, and suburban habitats.

Status: Vulnerable in UK, further listed as Least Concerned.

**European hedgehog-** The European hedgehog or *Erinaceus europaeus* lives in various western European countries such as Italy, Spain, France and the United Kingdom, among others. It usually measures between 25-35 (around 14 in) long, having an overall brown-black appearance, although some rare cases are blonde, albino or even grey. The European hedgehog inhabits wooded areas, but it also very well-known in urban areas. It has an omnivorous diet, and can live up to 10 years. It is a protected species in most of its habitat and therefore not being kept as pets, but are begin rescues often by people where they're not protected.



-European hedgehog

### 2) Southern white-breasted hedgehog- *Erinaceus concolor*

Size: Up 2 kg, 20- 30 cm

Diet: Omnivores: slugs, millipedes, earthworms, beetles, caterpillars and other insects, as well as supplementary fruits and mushrooms

Sexual Maturity: Around 8 months

Life Span: 2-3 years in the wild (expected even 7 years)

Range: Eastern Europe and Western Asia

Habitat: Woodland edges, hedgerows, and suburban habitats.

Status: Least Concerned.

**Southern white-breasted hedgehog -** The southern white-breasted hedgehog or *Erinaceus concolor* has a very similar appearance to the European hedgehog but differs by having a white spot on its belly or its chest. It's also more grey than the European hedgehog. It is found in Turkey, Greece and Western Asia. Their habitats are very similar. The species, much like Europeans Hedgehogs, is protected in most of its habitat.



Southern white-breasted

### 3) Northern white-breasted hedgehog- *Erinaceus roumanicus*

Size: Up 2 kg, 20- 30 cm

Diet: Omnivores: slugs, millipedes, earthworms, beetles, caterpillars and other insects, as well as supplementary fruits and mushrooms

Sexual Maturity: Around 8 months

Life Span: 2-3 years in the wild (expected even 7 years)

Range: Europe- Poland, Austria, Russia, Ukraine, Caucasus

Habitat: Woodland edges, hedgerows, and suburban habitats.

Status: Least Concerned.

**Northern white-breasted hedgehog-** The northern white-breasted hedgehog or *Erinaceus roumanicus* is found throughout Eastern Europe, Western Russia, Ukraine and the Caucasus. Although from the outside it reminds us of the European hedgehog, like the southern one it also has a white chest. Moreover, it differs from the two by having a larger white patch on the stomach, reaching from the genitals to the lower chin, sometimes extending towards the quill skirt, making them look completely white



Northern white-breasted

### 4) Amur hedgehog- *Erinaceus amurensis*

Size: 30 cm, 600 gram – 1 kg

Diet: Insectivores, though they will sometimes eat small animals and fruit

Sexual Maturity: From 8 months

Life Span: 8 years in captivity

Range: South-Eastern Russia, Korea and China

Habitat: mixed coniferous and broadleaf forests and open spaces, in valleys and lowlands. They prefer tall grasses or bushes and hedges.

Status: Least Concerned.

**Amur hedgehog -** The Amur hedgehog or *Erinaceus amurensis* lives in South-Eastern Russia, Korea and China. It measures about 30 cm (12 in) long and has a pale brown appearance. Its behavior is similar to that of the European hedgehog, though it is slightly lighter brown.





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- Amur hedgehog

## Steppe hedgehogs – Mesechinus

### 1) Gaoligong forest hedgehog-

Size: No info- new species, only one have been seen  
Diet: No info- new species, only one have been seen  
Sexual Maturity: No info- new species, only one have been seen  
Life Span: No info- new species, only one have been seen  
Range: China, Yunnan Province  
Habitat: Sub-tropical forest  
Status: Population Unknown

**The Gaoligong Forest Hedgehog** or *Mesechinus wangi* was thought to be extinct for decades and has only been rediscovered in 2018. (there are several other species that are extinct for example the 6 species within Egypt alone that aren't mentioned unless you dig further into Egyptian history specifically) The Gaoligong Forest Hedgehog are found only in China. It is endemic to the slopes of Mt. Gaoligong in the Yunnan Province, where it lives in subtropical evergreen broad-leaved forest at elevations between 2200 m and 2680 m. This distribution is disjunct from that of the other species in this genus. Gaoligong Forest hedgehogs can be distinguished from other species in the genus by its spine color patterns, the broad nasal region, and the presence of M4 teeth. It hibernates between mid-October and early April. While the population size has not yet been quantified, it is likely very small as the species has only been found in the Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve. The species is so extremely rare, only two specimens of this species has been seen since its re-discovery.



-The Gaoligong Forest Hedgehog

### 2) Daurian hedgehog- *Mesechinus dauuricus*

Size: 600 gram, 15-20 cm  
Diet: Insectivores: Insects  
Sexual Maturity: 6 Months of age  
Life Span: 6 years  
Range: Russia, Northern Mongolia  
Habitat: Forests and steppe, steppe consists mainly of grassland plains and scrublands  
Status: Protected

**Daurian hedgehog-** The Daurian hedgehog or *Mesechinus dauuricus* is a little hedgehog that lives in Russia and northern Mongolia. It is between 15 and 20 cm (6 to 8 in) long and is protected in those countries. They are not kept in captivity because of their protected status. It's also known as the 'doll hedgehog' because it looks so doll-like in its face.



- Daurian Hedgehog

### 3) Hugh's hedgehog- *Mesechinus hughi*

Size: 230-600 gram, 15-20 cm

Diet: Carnivorous

Sexual Maturity: Around 6 Months of age

Life Span: 6 years

Range: Central China

Habitat: Prefers open areas of dry steppe

Status: Protected

**Hugh's hedgehog-** Hugh's hedgehog or *Mesechinus hughi* looks like the European Hedgehog, but it is endemic to the steppes of central China. They are rare and protected and thus are not being kept in captivity.



- Hugh`s Hedgehog

### 4) Small-toothed Forest Hedgehog- *Mesechinus miodon*

Size: Not confirmed

Diet: Not confirmed

Sexual maturity: Not confirmed

Life Span: Not confirmed

Range: China

Habitat: Forestry, high altitude area

Status: Not confirmed

– Small-toothed Forest Hedgehog or *Mesechinus miodon* is a very rare species that is thought to be extinct and hasn't been seen since the 1990's. Because of the rediscovery of the Gaoligong Forest Hedgehog and the very high altitude of both species within the nature reserve, it is also thought they're just not been spotted due to the very low amount of people that actually live in the area or visit the area. There is no footage of the species because of this and the species is often forgotten about by scientists because of their status.

No Photo available on the Small- toothed Forest Hedgehog

**5) Eastern Forest Hedgehog – *Mesechinus orientalis***

Size: 200- 350 grams, 18 cm in length.

Diet: Insectivores omnivores - Insects and fruits

Sexual maturity: Not confirmed

Life Span: Not confirmed

Range: Eastern China

Habitat: Forestry, high altitude area

Status: Not endangered



*Mesechinus orientalis* is a newly discovered species. First noticed in 2018 and confirmed in 2023 with DNA testing that it is indeed a new species. This small-bodied hedgehog is similar to *Mesechinus hughi*, but smaller than other *Mesechinus* species.

The other *Mesechinus* species have much longer quills than the Eastern Forest Hedgehog, and very similar than a Lesser Tenrec. Spines are 1.8-2 cm in length. There are four colour rings on the spine from the base to the tip: two-thirds of the length is white at the base, followed by a 3-4 mm black ring, a narrow light ring, and a black tip.

The nose is a warm brown, with black whiskers on the snout; these whiskers shorten towards the nose. The ears are small and nearly the same length as the surrounding spines.

*Mesechinus orientalis* appears to be sexually dimorphic. The quills of males are generally grey, while the females are mostly reddish brown. This small hedgehog species is nocturnal and also hibernating.

