

Saving our hedgehogs





How many hedgehogs are in the UK?

- There are now **less than one million** Western European hedgehogs living in the UK... In the 1950s it was estimated there were 36.5 million hedgehogs in Great Britain

We appear to have lost over half our hedgehogs from our countryside since the millennium alone and have lost a third from our towns and cities...



This is why it is so important that we do all that we can to ensure the survival of these endearing and delightful animals



Hedgehog habitat

- Hedgehogs live in both urban and suburban areas
- Gardens provide hedgehogs with a plentiful supply of food, both natural and supplementary, as well as many potential nest sites for breeding, resting and hibernation
- For these reasons urban areas have become a stronghold for hedgehogs in recent years



Baby hedgehogs are called hoglets

Hedgehogs give birth in June and July, and they have an average litter size of four or five young

At birth hoglets are hairless, pink, with sealed eyes and ears and no spines, about 70 mm (+/- 15mm) long and 8-25 g in weight

The first white spines appear within the first day of birth. The second, pigmented, set of spines begin to emerge at 36-48 hours after birth and are the main spines by two to three weeks; these are replaced by the first adult spines from about six weeks old

Hoglets are able to roll up partially by 11 days and fully by about 28 days

The eyes and ears open at about two weeks old; fur is growing on the body by about this time. Thermoregulation is poor before two weeks old but is fully developed by about 27-32 days

Teeth start to erupt by about 20-21 days. They first take solid food at about 21-23 days and are fully weaned by 38-44 days old

Body weight may double in the first week, reaching six times birth weight by three weeks and 200-235g by six weeks



What can we do to help our hedgehogs?

- **Link your gardens together**
- Ensuring hedgehogs can pass freely through your garden is the most important thing you can do to help them
- Hedgehogs travel around **one mile** every night through our parks and gardens in their quest to find enough food and a mate. If you have an enclosed garden..this will get in the way of their plans!



Supplementary food for hedgehogs

The hedgehog's natural diet mainly consists of ground beetles, caterpillars, worms and slugs. During cold or dry periods, these creepy-crawlies become much scarcer in gardens, so hedgehogs will benefit hugely from a **shallow dish of water** and supplementary feeding at these times

It's important to remember that this food is only supplementary to their natural diet, so please be sure to provide a nice mixture of food to get all the nutrients that they need

Meat based cat food – in jelly, no fish or gravy, is best..Also, kitten biscuits help to keep their teeth clean

Hedgehogs are lactose intolerant so please **do not give them milk – this can kill them...**

Do not feed peanuts as these can get trapped in their mouth and no mealworms as these lack nutritional value and can cause metabolic bone disease, especially in young hedgehogs



The use of pesticides..

Slug pellets and pesticides are toxic chemicals intended to kill slugs and invertebrates.. Constant use of pesticides removes these invertebrates from the areas to which they are applied, meaning that hedgehogs and other animals that depend on them for their primary food source will not have sufficient food available and can result in hedgehogs dying of starvation..

When hedgehogs eat poisoned slugs and insects or ingest the pellets directly - even products that claim to be hedgehog-friendly - the chances are that they too will die!

**PLEASE DO NOT USE SLUG PELLETS IN YOUR GARDEN
...Please speak to your neighbours as well about the
use of slug pellets and pesticides if you want to
encourage hedgehogs into your garden**



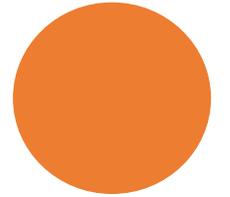
Dangers...

Hedgehogs like to sleep at the edges of lawns and so strimmers can be a big danger for them and often in rescues we have hedgehogs that have had their leg amputated...or their faces strimmed. So please check before strimming the lawn

A hedgehog can survive quite happily with only 3 legs (back leg amputee)

They also like to go to sleep, hibernate and also give birth in compost heaps, so please check before putting garden forks in

Hedgehogs are good swimmers, but if they fall into a pond, they often can't get out...so please, put a ramp in to allow them to climb out safely



Some hedgehog facts.....

- The Latin name for the European hedgehog is *Erinaceus europaeus*
- The snuffling noises they make as they search for their food in hedgerows gave hedgehogs their name
- Hedgehogs eat insects, worms and also on occasion, they will eat a dead mouse or frog!
- They are nocturnal and sleep all day in nests under bushes and in hedgerows
- They hibernate in winter because their food supply becomes incredibly scarce during the coldest months of the year. Hedgehogs construct a special hibernation nest called a hibernaculum. During hibernation their body temperature drops and their breathing rate slows dramatically. when they emerge from hibernation, hedgehogs have often lost half their body weight and they must find large quantities of food quickly
- Hedgehogs have a coat of about 5000 - 6000 spines. These act as a defence against predators and badgers. When a hedgehog is threatened, it can curl up into a spiky ball, protecting its belly and face

More hedgehog facts....

- Hedgehogs have an excellent sense of smell, and they use their long snouts to sniff out their prey
- Hedgehogs are solitary animals and they only come together to mate. The male hedgehog (the boar) isn't involved in rearing any offspring
- Female hedgehogs (sows) give birth to litters of an average of 4 - 6 babies. The young are born blind but they soon learn to hunt and will be surviving on their own after 2 – 3 months
- Hedgehogs have adapted well to living alongside humans. They are able to sleep in garden hedges and they love to eat cat food!
- Hedgehogs can move a lot quicker than people think
- The collective noun for a group of hedgehogs is an “array” of hedgehogs...in the USA it is often called a “prickle” of hedgehogs !

If you find a sick or injured hedgehog

- Pick it up
- Keep it warm
- Put in a cardboard box with a towel and a shallow bowl of water and cat food
- Contact your local rescue as soon as possible
- **Shelley Hedgehogs on 07849 104602 or find us on Facebook**
- **Or look for your nearest rescue at helpwildlife.co.uk**

