

AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOG CARE

African Pygmy hedgehogs (*Atelerix albiventris*) originate from central Africa, where they live a solitary life, mainly sleeping during the day and coming out to forage at night. They can make entertaining interactive pets if handled from a young age.

Longevity: 3 -5 years on average but 10 recorded in captivity

Sociability: Solitary animals that should be housed individually

Environment:

- We would recommend the largest enclosure you can obtain.
- Wire bottomed enclosures are not suitable as they will cause injury to the feet.
- Hedgehogs should be housed in a large glass or plastic tank with good ventilation, and a deep layer of bedding.
- Temperatures should be maintained between 24-30°C for these tropical animals, and the cage should be placed out of direct sunlight to avoid extremes of temperature.
- Suitable substrates include shredded paper or wood shavings (not sawdust or wood chips).
- Within the cage, nest boxes, branches and a wheel for exercise should be provided.
- Supervised exercise within a confined area in the house is encouraged, but it is important to prevent access to anything that could be chewed, eaten or destroyed.
- Hedgehogs may be litter trained, but are generally very messy animals and the enclosure will need frequent cleaning to help prevent disease.

Diet:

- Hedgehogs are naturally omnivorous, eating a large variety of insects in the wild, as well as occasional slugs, snails and small vertebrates.
- It is therefore recommended in captivity for their diet to be made up of high protein low fat cat food and vegetables.
- To avoid over feeding each night give 2 table spoons of dry reduced calorie cat food and 1-2 table spoons of mixed veg sprinkled with vitamin/mineral powder.



- In addition, several times a week 3-5 insects and a teaspoon of either baby food meats, hardboiled egg, meal worms etc can be given. These should also be dusted with calcium supplements.
- A balanced commercial hedgehog pellet can be given as an alternative but many of these have a high number of dried insects in.
- Additional vitamin and mineral supplementation should be applied to any insects given
- Obesity is a common problem in captive hedgehogs, so it is important to limit food amounts, feeding only at night, and removing any uneaten food in the early morning
- Water should always be freely available either in a drinking bottle or shallow bowl.

Preventative Healthcare:

- Hedgehogs are prone to dental disease which is why dry foods should make up a proportion of the diet.
- Keeping hedgehogs at the appropriate temperature range is important to avoid conditions such as infections

We recommend annual health checks every year for pet hedgehogs as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage – **you can register for automatic reminders**

Insurance:

We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then, after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details. There are a lot of different companies and policies available and we suggest you contact a number of them for information- we have a leaflet advising what to look out for. Our advice is to choose a policy which provides cover for chronic illness for the life of your pet. If this policy is too much for you then the best cover you can afford will provide piece of mind in an accident or emergency.

Common Health Complaints:

- Skin problems such as mite infestations and ringworm (which is actually a fungal infection) are a very common cause of quill loss
- Obesity is a common problem (see diet recommendations above)
- Dental disease
- Tumours are unfortunately very common in this species
- Heart disease also occurs in hedgehogs
- Neurological disease including ‘wobbly hedgehog syndrome’

