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Caring For Your Hedgehog

African Pygmy Hedgehogs can make fun, enjoyable pets. They are very unique and require a little different treatment than your ordinary pet mouse or hamster.

They are nocturnal pets in the wild, and will burrow and sleep most of the day. Try to play with them at night so as not to disturb their sleep patterns. Try to get into a routine of feeding them “breakfast” at around 8:00 pm.

Don't be afraid of their “hissing” noise. This is how they blow their quills up to protect themselves. The quills are uncomfortable but not harmful. The hedgehog's natural self defense is to ball up, stiffen their quills, hiss loudly and jerk and jump around so as to make it difficult for a predator to bite them. Once your pet gets used to your scent and you get used to their behavior, you will love them. Never pick them up from their back. Always scoop your hand under their belly where they are soft. Once they get familiar with you, they will stop hissing and their quills will soften. Be sure and take them out and handle them everyday. Hedgehog's don't normally bite.

Feeding: There are several good hedgehog diets on the market. Because the exact nutritional requirements of hedgehogs is not yet established, we still recommend occasionally supplementing their diet with low-fat high-protein treats like chicken baby food, chopped hard-boiled egg, or low-fat cottage cheese. You may also give them *small* amounts of apple, banana or vegetable—or an occasional mealworm! Water should be changed twice daily. They tend to get backwash in the water every time they drink, which causes fungal and bacterial growth—especially in sipper bottles.

Bedding and Housing: We recommend recycled paper bedding w/o any added perfumes. Never use cedar—it contains aromatic hydrocarbons which damage the respiratory tract and liver. Pine shavings are okay, but we discourage it if you house your pet in an aquarium. . Aquariums should be a minimum of 25 gal. Wire cages like those made for ferrets are best. Never use corn cob bedding—it attracts fungus and bacteria, and may be ingested by hedgehogs and cause a life-threatening obstruction. Make bedding at least 2” deep so they can root and burrow themselves and change at least once weekly. Hedgehogs can sometimes be litterbox trained. If the cage is small, try a 4”x4” plastic sandwich keeper—minus the lid.

Hibernation: Hedgehogs will hibernate if temperatures fall below 60 degrees. They do not need to hibernate and we do not recommend it due to stresses it places on their organ systems. Because they are from a warm climate in Africa, they do best in temps of 70 to 80 degrees. Do not place them in temps above 85. We recommend placing a thermometer in the cage to monitor the temp. Avoid any drafts or sudden changes in temperature, which can cause health problems.

Lifespan: Hedgehogs live 7 to 10 years if properly cared for. Most deaths are caused by chilling, ensuing depression and refusal to eat. Make an effort to watch how much water and food they drink. Also monitor the size, color and consistency of their feces and urine. Hedgehogs are prey animals and have a strong preservation instinct, therefore they will act normally as long as they can until they are critically ill. Be sure to spend as much time as possible with your hedgehog outside of it's cage. They are social animals and will become depressed if left alone too often. Be sure to call us at the first sign that your pet may be ill. We'll be happy to help!



Newborn hedgehog

Suggested websites: <http://www.pogstarhedgehogs.com/basiccare.html>,
<http://www.angelfire.com/wa2/comemeetmyfamily/CaringForYourHedgehog.html>