

Hedgehog



Atelerix albiventris

Found in southern Europe and throughout much of Africa, the hedgehog enjoys a diet made up of mostly insects, but they will also consume a variety of plant and animal matter. Hedgehogs are nocturnal, so they'll tend to sleep most of the daylight hours, and they have sharp quills that they extend while defensively rolled into a ball. Hedgehogs grow to a max size of 6 - 9 inches and have an average lifespan of 4 - 6 years, but can live up to 10 years.

Housing

Size

Hedgehogs are solitary animals, but still require a large enclosure. We recommend a solid bottom (no wire mesh) cage with a minimum size of 18in x 24in (3ft²). The bigger the better and multilevel is a plus. The cage should be located where your hedgie will get season appropriate photoperiods to maintain psychological health. Hedgehogs are sensitive to temperature fluctuations and care should be taken to maintain a cage temperature between 75°F and 80°F, but a minimum of 70°F must be maintained. Your hedgie will also appreciate some time to roam around and explore outside of its cage; small animal playpens are wonderful for this.

Bedding

We recommend only using a recycled newspaper/pulp bedding like Carefresh or Boxo. Cedar bedding contains oils that can cause respiratory problems and other wood based beddings can have an increased potential to become stuck to a male's genitals and becoming problematic.

Decor

A solid surface (no wire mesh) wheel is a must and should be greater than 11in in diameter to prevent your hedgie's spine from curving too sharply. Toys should include pipes/tubes greater than 4in in diameter (so your hedgie doesn't get stuck) as well as balls and bells. An appropriately sized hide is another must so your hedgie has a place to hide and feel secure. A litter pan is an optional addition because some hedgehogs can be litter trained. Recycled paper litter pellets are recommended and clay or clumping litters must be avoided. Finally, two food bowls should be available to your hedgie, one for dry food and one for wet food.



Some products to look for

- 8 in 1 Hedgehog Diet
- Oxbow Pure Comfort Small Animal Bedding
- Critter Ware Flying Saucer
- Kaytee Long John Litter Pan
- Living World Ergonomic Dish
- Pestell EasyClean Litter Pellets
- Sunseed Wigglers & Berries Trail Mix Treats
- Kaytee Chewbular Play Tube
- Critter Ware Twigloo



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Water

A water bottle is appropriate for a hedgehog, but some do not take to using one. In the event your hedgehog is averse to using a water bottle you can substitute a shallow water dish heavy enough to prevent tipping.

Diet

Dry & Wet

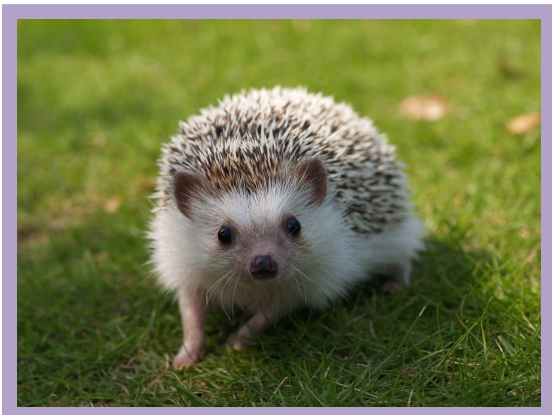
Hedgehogs should be offered both wet and dry foods. Food bowls should be shallow and heavy enough to prevent tipping, or attached to the cage. Both foods should be high in protein and meat based. There are several commercially available dry hedgehog diets that you can feed your hedgehog. For wet food, you should offer a canned cat or dog food. Hedgehogs are not picky eaters and have the potential to become obese. Make sure to monitor your hedgehog for signs of excess weight gain. If it appears to be getting a little overweight you should adjust the amount of food you're offering.

Fresh Food

Fresh foods are an excellent supplemental nutrition option, but should be offered sparingly. There are many fruit and vegetable options that are safe for your hedgehog, but grapes and raisins should be avoided as they are toxic. Uneaten portions of fresh food items should be removed after 24 hours.

Treats

Being omnivorous opens up a myriad of treat options for your hedgehog. In the wild, hedgehogs eat insects, and in captivity they'll appreciate the occasional mealworm or cricket. You should never use insects found around your home as they can contain parasites, pesticides, and other harmful chemicals. Cooked, unseasoned meat, like hamburger or chicken, and eggs are another great, high protein treat option. Many commercially available moist cat and dog treats can be used as hedgehog treats, provided they are meat based.



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