

# Hedgehog

(*Atelerix sp.*)



<b>Adult Size</b>	1 pound, 6 inches
<b>Lifespan</b>	8 – 10 years
<b>Male/Female Difference</b>	A penis sheath is present and testes can be obvious in males. In young hedgehogs, sexing is done by eyeing the distance between the urethra and the anus; the distance is further apart in males.
<b>Compatibility</b>	Hedgehogs are solitary animals. Males will fight by lowering the spines over their eyes as a sort of visor and charge each other. House all hedgehogs, males and females, separately.
<b>Origin</b>	Northern Africa
<b>Climate</b>	Average house temperatures are fine. Avoid extremes; high heat can cause strokes and low temperatures can lead to hibernation, a state the animal is not prepared for that can be fatal.
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Normally nocturnal, can switch to days.
<b>Temperature</b>	60 – 75 Degrees is ideal.
<b>Lighting</b>	Normally lighting is not an issue, as these animals are nocturnal. If switched to a diurnal cycle, avoid intense lighting, as hedgehogs have sensitive eyes.
<b>Humidity</b>	Being from such a dry climate, hedgehogs prefer lower humidity but can tolerate most indoor conditions.
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	Native to arid scrub- and grassland in northern Africa, these animals are also burrowers. They will root and dig around their cages in the substrate.
<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	Low dust litters, such as recycled paper products and pelleted litter, can be used. Avoid shaved aspen, sand, or small grained litter as this can get under the spines and cause irritation. Corn cob should not be used as it can harbor mold spores.
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	Wooden house make great, safe, and secure sleeping places – mimicking their natural burrows.

<b>Cage Type</b>	Cages with easily cleaned plastic bottoms and airy wire tops make great homes. The larger the better – There should be room for the larger plastic exercise wheels. Hedgehogs love to climb (despite their squat, bulky shape), so ramps or ladders allow for more exercise and fun. Cat toys can be used for toys.
<b>Diet</b>	Naturally insectivorous in the wild, most of their nutritional needs can be met with pelleted foods made specifically for hedgehogs . Live insects such as wax worms, super worms, and crickets offer fresh nutrition (especially gut loaded insects.)
<b>Supplements</b>	Extra protein in the form of soft scrambled eggs, canned dog or cat food, or freeze dried treats can be offered. Dark leafy greens, vegetables, and soft fruits, offered sparingly, can add variety to their diet, as can small amounts of cooked meat. Prepackaged pasta mixes and vegetable mixes can be served dry or warm. Enzymes help hedgehogs get more nutrition out of their foods.
<b>Diet Precautions</b>	Obesity can occur from over feeding and lack of exercise. Even though hedgehogs love milk and cheese, these should never be fed as these animals are lactose intolerant. Meal worms can cause obesity.
<b>Feeding</b>	Hedgehogs are awake when their food is awake. In the wild, this is at night. By removing food at night and replacing it during the day at home switches their schedule to match yours. Food should be served room temperature or warmed; cold food from the refrigerator can cause digestive upset.
<b>Water Source</b>	Water bottles stay cleaner than water dishes, as hedgehogs can kick substrate into it.
<b>Grooming</b>	Hedgehogs groom themselves. The need a bath once or twice a year, using mild baby shampoo.
<b>Oral and Foot Care</b>	Long nails need to be trimmed, a tricky task that should be done by someone with experience (your vet or Wilmette Pet). Hedgehogs have no real oral problems.
<b>Proper Handling</b>	Startled or scared hedgehogs are so defensive that handling them is uncomfortable. They can be then scooped up with a flat spatula or towel. Calm, relaxed hedgehogs are active and very handleable and seem to enjoy climbing over and around your hand. When startled they can roll up and raise their spines, making it likely they will be dropped, so keep them close to the ground. Do not use gloves, as this prevents the hedgehog from becoming accustomed to your scent.
<b>Habitat Maintenance</b>	Being desert animals hedgehogs are fairly clean. Spot clean daily and replace substrate weekly. Hedgehogs can be trained to the litter pan in their cage; place soiled bedding for scent.
<b>Health Concerns</b>	Check new hedgehogs for signs of fleas or mites. Hedgehogs are pretty hardy animals. Respiratory problems can result from lack of ventilation and unclean homes. A condition hedgehog breeders must watch out for is called Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome (WHS), a neurological condition similar to MS in humans. Hedgehogs can occasionally suffer from congenital cancers.

