



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, and can live between 3-6 years if looked after correctly.

ACCOMMODATION

- 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 in out of direct sunlight to avoid extremes of temperature.
- Suitable substrates include shredded paper or wood shavings (not sawdust).
- 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.

COMPANIONS

- Hedgehogs are not social animals, and should be kept alone to prevent fighting

WHAT TO FEED

- 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 a mix of insects or a balanced commercial hedgehog pellet.
- 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.

VACCINATIONS

- No routine vaccinations are currently recommended for hedgehogs

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PARASITES

- No routine parasite prevention is currently recommended for hedgehogs

SIGNS OF ILL HEALTH

- As hedgehogs are a prey species they will hide disease, so the first time you see any signs you must act quickly.
- A healthy hedgehog will be bright and alert with clear open eyes, ears and nostrils. Your hedgehog should also be keen to eat and drink, and pass faeces regularly.
- It is important to become familiar with your hedgehog's normal appearance, movement and behaviour, in order that signs of illness can be noticed at an early stage.
- You should look out for any changes in appetite or faeces passed, as well as changes in weight, behaviour, coat condition or breathing. Other signs of illness include discharges from the eyes, nose or mouth
- Bleeding or discharges from anywhere should be assessed by your vet
- Limping, change in grooming behaviour or wounds should be assessed by your vet.
- If you have any concerns contact your vet as soon as possible