

# CARE PACK

for African Pygmy  
Hedgehogs



## CARE SHEET FOR AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOGS

Bringing your new pet home can be very traumatic for the hedgehog and the owner. He/she will be in new surroundings and have new tastes and smells to grow accustomed to, your baby will also have just been removed from its mother and siblings.

However with patience, understanding and gentle handling, your hedgehog will make a lovely new pet, there are some things you can do to help your new friend through this unsettling period.

- Continue to feed your hedgehog some of its staple food can help minimise stress, and so I will give you a supply of your hedgehog's current food.
- You can put an old, worn item of your clothing in with your hedgehog for the first few days, so he/she can get used to your

scent.

It is OK to handle your hedgehog when you first bring them home, but please refrain from letting friends etc handle. Give them time to settle in. He/she might be jumpy as everything is new, so keep noise and movement to a minimum if possible. It may take a few days for your hedgehog to grow accustomed to its new environment. It is important to handle him/her through this time. All hogs are different and some will change over without any problems, but some may become a little shy and/or withdrawn the first few days.

## HOW TO HANDLE YOUR NEW PET

You can pick up your hedgehog by using a 'scooping' technique. This is done by placing your up-turned palms either side of its body and bringing them together under the hog's belly. Your hedgehog may well huff and hiss



or even roll into a ball. This is perfectly normal, it is important that you take no notice and continue to pick them up, even if you need

to use a blanket at first. As soon as the hedgehog realises that you mean it no harm this behaviour will stop. A good way of encouraging the bonding process is by bribery! Most hedgehogs love mealworms and a tasty hand-fed morsel will teach your hedgehog that you are a friend.





# ENCLOSURES

- Vivariums – This is the most commonly used enclosure for Hedgehogs and makes a very good home. Generally a minimum of 3 foot, 4 foot being the ideal, and above are recommended. They are wooden and easy to clean. The benefits are they are easy to customise, keep in warmth and are stackable. The main downside to vivs is the air flow and ventilation. This is normally overcome by simply adding extra vents to the viv, or making the doors from mesh (fly mesh is recommended).
- A large Zoozone 2 – make another good choice of enclosure. They are plastic with an open vented roof and are easy to clean. Their drawback is that they are not designed to be stacked on top of each other. These are an ideal enclosure for people with only one hedgehog and can be kept in a warm, heat controlled room.

- You can also make your own enclosure if you're happy to do some DIY. People convert all types of furniture. Similar to a vivarium, use glass, mesh or perspex.
- Minimum size for an enclosure is 3' x 1½' but 4ft would be the recommended.
- Your hedgehog's home should be placed away from draughts and kept between 21-24°C. It should be lit for 12 hours per day using natural or artificial light, although kept out of direct sunlight.







## SUBSTRATES AND BEDDING/NESTING MATERIAL

There are several options for substrates and bedding, some of which are listed below :-

- Blanket / Fleece liner – The fleece needs to be washed as required and spare fleeces need to be kept in case of accidents and between washes.
- Carefresh – Is reputed to be one of the best beddings on the market. It absorbs liquids very well, it is also dust extracted and also absorbs odour. Good for hedgehogs with dust allergies, although as particulate bedding, it contains the same dangers for male hedgehogs. Remove damp patches regularly to avoid possible mites.
- Back2Nature – It is also dust extracted and good for hedgehogs with dust allergies.
- Finacard – Is a shredded, dust extracted cardboard that can only be purchased

via their website ([www.finacard.co.uk](http://www.finacard.co.uk)).

- Newspaper – Simple and free, it is also dust free and makes a good base. The downside is that unlike all the other substrates, the newspaper must be changed everyday where as the others may be spot cleaned every day and renewed on a weekly basis.



- For bedding/nesting materials, you can use shredded paper towels, newspaper or paper flakes, pouches or snuggle blankets.

Personally, I use cotton or fleece liners and pouches and have kitchen roll or Finacard in my litter tray

## HIDES

Again there are a few options, and here it all depends on personal choice.

- Plastic Igloos – These igloos, such as Super Pet or Savic, found in Pets at Home, are made of plastic, come in a variety of shades, and are easy to clean. Care must be taken with regards to condensation due to heating, as well as checking for sharp edges prior to offering it to your hog.

- Fleece cube/ bunker – Hedgehogs do like these, and they have the added benefit of being able to pick them out of the enclosure completely with the hog inside.



- Log cabins – Designed for rabbits or guinea pigs, but hedgehogs really like them. Trixie do various designs or you can find customised houses on fb.



## FOOD GUIDE

I will supply some staple food for your hedgehog for you to take home. I use a mix of 4 brands to balance the diet but this also allows for if a biscuit gets changed / discontinued you're not left with a hog that won't eat anything. It is important to avoid fish based foods. Hedgehogs are also lactose intolerant, so should have no foods that contain milk or its derivatives. This is my biscuit mix that all my hogs have:

- 30% James Wellbeloved Light Turkey
- 30% Iams for vitality
- 20% Purina One sensitive
- 20% Royal Canin fit 32

This is my biscuit mix that all my hogs have. I would recommend that this is not changed until at least 16wks of age. At this age they have only just been weaned and so their diet

should not be changed immediately.



When choosing a food look to see that it should ideally be between 30-34% protein, and



between 10-15% fat. Also ensure that the first ingredient is meat as this is better nutritionally than meatmeal. Avoid using foods that contain cereals as the first ingredient as primary food sources, it is acceptable to have one 'junk' food, but the majority of your mix should be good quality.

## ADDITIONAL FOOD

- I feed cooked meat every day, this includes chicken or beef, lamb or turkeymince. With this, I also offer fruit and vegetables chopped very small.
- Good examples of fresh fruit and vegetables are strawberry, apple, sweet potato, carrot, cucumber, pear, mashed banana, broccoli, cauliflower, squash, melon, bell pepper, peas and pumpkin.
- Some hedgehogs will eat the vegetables and fruit, others will not.

- Scrambled egg (milk free) and boiled eggs are also appreciated by hedgehogs.
- Hedgehogs should never be fed avocados, onions, garlic, grapes, raisins or sultanas, chocolate, peanuts & other legumes or other seeds & nuts (choking hazard), citrus fruits & pineapple, any raw meat, pork product in any form or raw egg yolks or any canned or processed foods

## LIVEFOODS

Livefood is an essential part of any hedgehogs diet. Whilst kibble is their staple diet, livefood provides extra vitamins and minerals they need. Livefood should be gutloaded with fresh fruit / vegetables to make it nutritional and it should also be sprinkled with calci dust. Calci dust helps give them the essential calcium needed to avoid deficiency diseases.

Some livefoods can be kept in the fridge to

prevent them ' turning ' into their flying form. Please remove all excess veg after gutloading before doing this. When certain insects get too moist you can get mites. Never feed livefood to your pet if you suspect they are off in any way.

Please don't be tempted to feed dried mealworms , they have absolutely no nutritional value and can infact cause blockages in the intestines.

Livefood list-

Mealworms , waxworms, crickets, locust, calci worms , snails ( not from the garden) , roaches , fruit beetle , giant orange woodlice , earthworms ( not from from garden ) buffalo worms , morio worms, silk worms.

Although not live some people also offer ' pinkies ' to their hedgehogs . These are very nutritional and high in fat. An excellent tasty treat !



The amount of livefood fed to your hog will depend on your hogs size and how active they are. Having an overweight hog is not advised as it puts additional strain on their organs and can shorten their lifespan. The more varied the livefood you can offer the better. All are safe fed in moderation. There is much debate about mealworms but fed sparingly as part of a balanced diet and

sprinkled with calci dust they are safe. Fed in large quantities to a hedgehog with a poor diet they could potentially cause MBD.

If you really can't face feeding livefood you can purchase some vacuum packed insects that you can freeze and defrost as needed or you can buy live and freeze yourself. It is important that they do get insects in their diet.

### Livefood suppliers

Whilst it is easy to go to the local pet shop to

get some livefood the quality of insect you get is often poor. You'll find when ordered online they are much fresher and will last longer if kept well.

## WHEELS

Although you may interact with your hedgehog for extensive amounts of time, the fact is sooner or later it will be bedtime for you and your hog will still be awake. You will need something to stop it becoming bored during the late hours of the night.

A wheel is considered a requirement, and hogs have been recorded as running as far as 10km per night on their wheels. For my hogs i use and recommend the Tic Tac bucket Wheel™ but the Carolina Storm wheels are also good although slightly smaller . I will require you to have one of these wheels before you collect your hoglet. I'm sorry but not other wheels are acceptable.



## OTHER TOYS

Tunnels – Seagrass, cardboard and plastic tunnels designed for ferrets and guinea pigs can be used, as can PVC pipe (4" diameter or more) segments such as T-junctions and elbow bends. I also use hand-made fabric tunnels.

Toys – You can use the majority of cat, ferret, rat or miniature dog sized toys. Beware of gaps that might trap hog-feet, or toys that make loud, startling noises – bells, bead rattles, etc are fine however. Keep in mind

that hogs do not gnaw like rodents, nor do they appear to be affected by catnip like cats (although there is also no evidence that they aren't negatively affected – most appear to ignore the scent).

Whilst out of their enclosure, a hedgehog likes nothing better than running around the floor exploring. Playpens (made from child ball pits or paddling pools, modified rabbit runs, or Pets at Home hamster play pens – watch for climbing bars/digging under) filled with tunnels and toys can be used if you would rather the hedgehog did not have the freedom to roam.

They will also enjoy running around you and climbing all over you, often choosing to go to sleep on your shoulder, or trying to hide in your clothing.

If allowing free-roaming, take care when opening doors and block off all holes, no matter how small, including beneath sofas, and around fireplaces.



# TEMPERATURE

Aph are exotic animals and will need to be kept in a heated environment. This is best achieved by housing them in a viv where it is simple to heat. I would recommend a 150w ceramic heat emitting bulb to be placed in the middle of the viv and attached to a pulse thermostat. This is set as 21°C ( up to 24 in winter) and left on 24/7. The thermostat will turn the bulb on and off as required . Some hogs prefer it a little warmer and you may need to increase the temperature over the colder months. Remember, if the temperature drops below 21°C then there is a chance that your hog will try to hibernate. This can be fatal to this type of hog and must not be allowed to happen. In very hot weather, you can use a fan (avoid direct drafts), offer chilled ice packs (wrapped in fleece), or smooth ceramic tiles for cooling to avoid overheating.

# QUILLING

Quilling is a term that refers to the shedding of a set of quills and growing in a new set. This occurs several times in a young hedgehog's life, typically at 2-3 weeks, 5 weeks, and 8-12 weeks of age. Typical signs of quilling include irritability, dropped quills, itching, red patches, new quill points breaking through the skin and dry skin may be visible. This is a normal occurrence for hedgehogs, similar to teething in infants. Quilling is a gradual process, and should include new quills replacing the old quills within a very short period of time after they shed. Because of this, there are no bald spots or thinning areas visible in the hedgehogs quill coat. Any bald spots are signs of a problem that is not related to normal quilling. Behaviour during quilling is often very antisocial. However, if you stop to think about what the hedgehog is going through during

this time, especially the final quilling (usually around 8-12 weeks of age), it is very understandable why they are uncomfortable. Quilling is a major event in their life that is comparable to cutting teeth all over your entire body, plus hitting puberty at the same time. The good news is that they will get over it. This phase varies in length between hedgehogs, some are over it as short as 4-5 days, and others can take over 4 weeks. However, if you continue to handle, they will improve again and be very near their normal non-quilling temperament.

There are a few things that you can do to help ease the stress and discomfort of quilling. While I don't normally recommend bathing your hedgehog too often, during quilling baths can be helpful in soothing the hedgehogs' skin. I recommend warm baths with either oatmeal or Aveeno products approximately once every week, but only if your hedgehog appears very uncomfortable.

Also, adding a tablespoon or so of olive oil, flaxseed oil, or other non-toxic, non flavoured edible oil to some fresh meat and insects can help in the general care and softening of their skin which in turn can help them be more comfortable during the quilling process.

The key to getting your hedgehog through quilling is daily handling and being persistent. Although your hedgehog may hiss , pop, click at you please continue to handle and do not put them back in their viv until they have settled.

## BATHING

Your hedgehog will occasionally need a bath however please do not over bath them as it strips the skin and quills of natural oils. It is recommended to bath your hog approx every 3/4 mths. Hoglets often have more baths as it can help ease the pain of quilling but the



downside to too many baths is dry and flaky skin and in severe cases loss of quills/ fungal infection. Foot baths will be needed more regularly to ensure the nails remain poop free.

It is best to bath your hedgehog during the day as it can cause issues with body temperature. Always make sure your hedgehog is dried off well in a nice warm towel and is not damp when returned to their viv. Pay particular attention to under their armpits as sores can often form here if left damp.

To bath your hedgehog fill a sink or bowl with a couple of inches of warm water so it is shallow enough for the hedgehog to stand in comfortably. Add a drop of aveeno bath or 1/4 of an oatmeal sachet ( both shown below ) to the water. Placing a flannel on the base of the sink will allow your hog to grip rather than slide around. Gently cup the water over your hedgehog, avoiding eyes and ears.

If there are any particularly dirty patches , a soft toothbrush can be used to help remove these. If you struggle to clip your hedgehogs nails, now might be the time to do this as they do not ball in water. When your hedgehog is clean rinse your hedgehog in water and dry well.

Please never make your hedgehog swim unless for weight loss / mobility purposes and under the guidance of an experienced keeper/ vet.

For a foot bath , fill a small plastic box with a tiny bit of water and just let your hedgehog walk through it. Any poop will soften and be easily removed.

Please do not use normal shampoo or oils to bath your hedgehog. Below are 3 products used which help sooth their skin and keep it in good condition. If your hedgehog suffers from dry skin , flaxseed capsules are

recommended to add onto their food.



## ADDITIONAL

For more updates and information please join my facebook group – Tiggyhogs. [http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/](http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/422487384487603/)

[422487384487603/](http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/422487384487603/)

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