

Roger's Aquatics & Pet Supplies: Hedgehogs

African pygmy hedgehogs, more often referred to simply as hedgehogs, have become a popular small pet due to their adorable appearance and somewhat grumpy character. They originate from Africa and Europe. Under proper care, they can live 6 – 8 years in captivity. Since some hedgehogs can be moody, so they are not recommended as a first pet for younger children.

Enclosure: Size, Substrate, and Accessories

Hedgehogs should be provided with a minimum of a 4 foot long by 2 foot wide enclosure, with a solid base, not a wire one. Multiple levels can also be used in the enclosure to provide more space for the hog.

A temperature range of 72°F – 80° F (22.2°C – 26.6°C) is ideal, but generally, if you're comfortable, they're comfortable as well. If the temperature isn't warm enough, a heat lamp with an appropriate wattage bulb or a heat pad hooked up to a thermostat should be used to warm the enclosure.

For substrate, a paper based bedding such as Uber, Fresh N' Comfy by Living World, or Pure Comfort by Oxbow are ideal, but aspen bedding can also be used. Cedar bedding should always be avoided as it can cause respiratory infections.

Hogs require enrichment. An exercise wheel is an absolute must have. The wheel should be large enough that the hog can run with its back completely straight. It should also be a solid wheel so that its feet don't get sore while running. Tubes, tunnels, ledges, and other toys should also be available to keep them entertained. A house is also an important part of a proper hog enclosure. The house should be large enough for the hog to fit its whole body in. Small pet igloos are a popular choice, as well as fleece pouches.

Diet

Hogs are primarily insectivores in the wild, but will consume plant and animal matter. Cat foods that are 20 – 30% protein, around 15% in fat, and around 15% in fibre are ideal. Foods that are chicken based usually work best, and red meat formulas should be avoided. 1 – 2 tablespoons of dry food is plenty for a hedgehog. Too much dry food can lead to obesity. They will readily accept mealworms, superworms, and crickets for the bug portion of their diet. Although they may not accept it, they can be offered blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, squash, or dark leafy greens as a treat only.

A water dish or bottle should be available at all times for the hog. It's usually a matter of preference between bowl and bottle, however if you notice that the hog is chewing at the bottle a lot, it would be best to switch to a bowl as they have been known to break their teeth on the bottle nozzles.

Hygiene

Hedgehogs are generally clean animals – as long as the cage is clean, they shouldn't require additional shampooing – but they may need their feet cleaned from time to time as they tend to poop on their wheel and run it. They do enjoy water and will have a lot of fun in a bath. A bath once a month is plenty, more than that may dry out the hogs skin. Nail trimming may be required if the nails get too long. A rock can be added to the enclosure to help wear the nails down as well.



Playtime & Handling

The best time to interact with a hedgehog is during the evening, when they are most active. They can be sleepy, and as a result grumpy if you wake them up, which can make handling more difficult. The quills on their back look scarier than they actually are, but you can rest a piece of cloth on yourself during handling if you're worried. Treats can be used to bribe the hedgehog to come out of a ball if it is really scared, and having the hedgehog associate you with something good like food will help get it used to handling.

Cohabitation

Hedgehogs are solitary in the wild, and do best when they are housed alone in captivity. They do not form social bonds with other hedgehogs, so it is of no benefit to house them with one.

Checklist of Supplies

- ✓ Enclosure (with lid, if an aquarium is used)
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Exercise wheel
- ✓ Bedding
- ✓ Cat food
- ✓ Worm or cricket keeper
- ✓ House
- ✓ Chew toys
- ✓ Food dish
- ✓ Heat lamp and bulb OR heat pad with a thermostat
- ✓ Thermometer