

Hedgehog Care Guide

Housing

Plastic tote/bin cages (105-110qt or larger) - They may not be the most appealing to look at, but tote cages are the safest and easiest to clean. The solid walls prevent any climbing injuries and they are super easy to sanitize. If using the lid to your tote/bin cage, the lid will need to be altered to provide ventilation. This can be done by cutting out the middle of the lid and replacing it with hardware cloth.

Other cage options are okay to use but will need to be altered with at least 10" of coroplast against the bars. The coroplast will prevent climbing and other injuries. Keep in mind that larger cages may need more than one heat source.

Cage options that need to be altered:

- Barred cages with solid bottoms
- Midwest cages
- Critter Nation cages

Aquariums are designed to hold water and humidity and are not recommended.

Heat source

Hedgehogs need a constant heat source to prevent hibernation attempts. If left untreated, hibernation attempts can be fatal. To prevent hibernation, your cage must maintain a temperature of 75-80 degrees.

Heating options:

1. Heating a small room for your hedgehog. This can be done with an electric space heater that has a digital thermostat set to the correct temperature. You will need a thermometer in both the room you are heating and also the hedgehogs cage to be certain that the temperature is being maintained.
2. The other option (most common) is to heat the cage with a ceramic heat emitter (CHE). A ceramic heat emitter is a bulb that screws into a dome lamp. It is important to note that a CHE does not produce light. Regular heat bulbs (usually red or blue) will produce light that disrupts a hedgehog's natural sleep cycle. When using a CHE, you will also need a ceramic dome (plastic dome lamps are not rated for a CHE and could melt), probe thermometer and a thermostat to control the temperature.

Heating pads do not raise the ambient temperature and can cause severe burns.

Bedding

- Fleece
- Pine shavings (low dust/kiln dried)
- Pine pellets
- Paper bedding (such as Carefresh or Clean & Cozy)
- Aspen

Don't use cedar (toxic).

Some feed stores sell pine shavings that are actually sawdust. Sawdust is very dusty and can lead to respiratory illness. I recommend the Tractor Supply Pine shavings (yellow or white bag).

Wheels

Wheels need to be large and have a solid running space. There are only two safe wheel options for hedgehogs, a bucket wheel and a Kaytee Comfort Wheel.

1. Carolina Storm Bucket Wheel – This is the best quality wheel, its silent and they last forever.
2. The 12" Kaytee Comfort Wheel – Its easily found in stores. Its safe but noisy and not the best quality.

Silent Spinner wheels are known to pinch off toes! They are NOT recommended.

Cage accessories

- Dish(s) for food and water (such as Living World ceramic dishes)
- A water bottle if you aren't using a dish for water
- A hide (such as plastic igloos or sleep sacks)
- Toys and clutter (4" PVC tubes, cat toys, rubber duckies, plastic balls, small stuffies)

Avoid wooden toys and toys with holes or slits (such as plastic balls with slits).

Diet

What you decide to feed your hedgehog is very important. Choosing a good diet will help your hedgehog live a long healthy life.

Foods found in stores that are marketed for hedgehogs are extremely poor quality and should not be used.

The **only** hedgehog food I recommend is Hedgehog Precision. Hedgehog Precision is an insect-based kibble that was specifically designed for hedgehogs. Its not available in stores but can be purchased on their website www.hedgehogprecision.com.

If you choose not to feed Hedgehog Precision or decide to mix it with a dry cat food, choose a high-quality cat kibble. I recommend mixing at least two quality cat kibbles together.

There are a few things to look for when choosing your foods:

1. Check the ingredients! Meat should always be the first ingredient. You want foods with more animal proteins and less plant proteins.
2. I try to find foods without multiple pea fillers (peas, legumes, pea protein, pea fiber, chickpeas, etc.)
3. Grains. I find that some grains are beneficial to a hedgehog's diet because they provide fiber. Grain free foods have been linked to cardiomyopathy in dogs. To stay on the safe side, if using a grain free food, we recommend mixing it with a bag that does contain the grains.
4. Choose foods with an absolute maximum of 15% fat. Too much fat in their diet will lead to obesity.
5. Kibble size! Some cat foods have very large kibbles that may be hard for a hedgehog to eat.

Remember that a hedgehog only eats 1-2 TBS per day, so the foods will last much longer than feeding a cat or a dog.

In addition to the kibbles you choose to feed, hedgehogs need to be supplied with fresh bugs (frozen is fine if you don't like creepy crawlies. Dried bugs can cause impaction) and whole prey items.

Bugs:

- Mealworms
- Crickets or Cricket powder
- Black soldier fly larva/phoenix worms/calci-worms
- Super worms
- Dubia roaches
- Wax worms
- Silkworms
- Hornworms
- Butterworms

Whole Prey:

- Pinky mice (live or frozen thawed)
- Day old quail (live or frozen thawed)
- Reptilinks (can be purchased online)
- Cooked Organ meats (chicken gizzards or hearts)

Hedgehogs DO NOT need vegetables and fruits added to their diet. Hedgehogs lack a cecum and cannot properly break down fruits and vegetables like other animals can.

Bathing

Bathing your hedgehog should only be done when necessary. Too many baths can lead to dry skin.

Bathe in a shallow bath of warm water. If needed, you can use an unscented baby wash such as Aveeno brand. Use a soft baby toothbrush to cleanse the feet and the quills. Rinse thoroughly and dry well.

To clip nails, we use small cat clippers or cuticle clippers. To cut the nails place your hedgehog on a table or counter and gently pull the legs to the side to trim the nails.

For stubborn hedgehogs that wont unball, the nails can be trimmed in the bath. The hedgehog won't be able to ball up while standing in water.

There have been many cases of fungal infections from oils being applied topically. For dry skin, we recommend adding a little flax seed oil or salmon oil to their food and avoid putting it directly on the skin.

Bonding

Huffing puffing and popping when you bring your hedgehog home is completely normal. You may even hear some grunts and clicks. The hedgehog's natural defense is to intimidate predators with their popping and grunting and then rolling into a ball to protect its soft belly. It's what hedgehogs do!

Don't be intimidated by your hedgehog. Be confident when handling your new hedgehog. If the huffs and puffs are causing you to not handle your baby, the hedgehog will continue to act this way.

Handle your hedgehog often. Scoop the hedgehog up from underneath without hesitation. Move him or her from hand to hand to get them used to being handled. Hold them face down in your hands. Handling them on their back will likely slow the bonding process because they feel most vulnerable on their backs.

Put your hedgehog in a bonding pouch and place it on your lap while you watch TV, it's a great way for your hedgehog to get used to your smell and the sounds of the home.

For more detailed descriptions with links and photos, visit my website:

www.pricklypotatohedgehog.com

For any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to send me an email:

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or message us on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/pricklypotatohedgehogs