

SLEEPY HOLLOW HEDGEHOGS

APH CLUB APPROVED BREEDER & RSPCA APPROVED APH RESCUE



A GUIDE TO KEEPING AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOGS

BY

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Sleepy Hollow Hedgehogs

African Pygmy Hedgehog Club UK
Approved Breeder

CARE GUIDE

First of all though what is an African Pygmy Hedgehog?

The African Pygmy Hedgehog or APH is, some believe, a hybrid of the four toed hedgehog and the Algerian hedgehog and is the most popular species of domesticated hedgehog in the world. This theory is actually looking more and more unlikely though. For further reading Bente at Hedgehogs of Asgard has a very informative [blog](#) on this subject. The huge size difference between the 2 species makes it seem logistically improbable. Further research is required as yet others claim a species very similar to our own pet hedgehog is living in Algeria and our's are not a hybrid at all. Whichever theory you favour our hedgehogs are specifically bred for the pet market and keeping wild hedgehogs or European hedgehogs as a pet is illegal.



Images by kind permission of Bente

As hedgehogs are becoming more popular as pets here in the UK so are the many myths that abound about good husbandry and how best to care for them. Here is some essential information to help you learn what is required to keep you and your pets happy and healthy. All information in this care guide is reviewed and updated regularly and adheres to all current UK African Pygmy ethics and guidelines.



I highly recommend joining our [Club](#) group on Facebook which has over 8,000 members and is now the only recognised body in the UK responsible for issuing pedigrees and the registration certificates of ownership for hedgehogs bred here and imported from abroad. If you already own a hedgehog which was registered under the previous and now expired UK APH registry you can transfer your hedgehog's details over to the African Pygmy Hedgehog Club [Register](#) for free.



APH are not really suitable as pets for young children. They need gentle, patient handling and you must be willing to spend a minimum of 20 minutes each and every day with your hedgehog or it can become unsociable, grumpy and huffy. APH like our native European hedgehogs are nocturnal so the first question we need to ask is.....is a hedgehog the right pet for me?

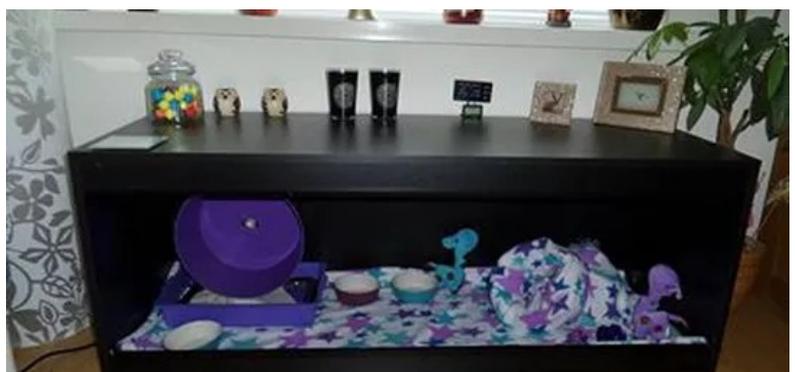
They have quills which can hurt, they need a constant temperature of 24 degrees so unlike a Guinea pig or hamster your own living temperature may not be enough and additional heat will be required. As they are nocturnal like a hamster they will spend a lot of the night running on a wheel. Will that disturb you if your hedgehog is kept in your bedroom with you? They need to have their wheel cleaned every day of poop and urine. Can you cope with cleaning a messy or smelly wheel every single day?

The information on this website is a work in progress as we are learning about these amazing animals all the time. I update it as and when new information is brought to my attention and as regularly as I can. There is very little hedgehog specific equipment and so the reptile/guinea-pig/chinchilla/cat specific items we do use have all been tried and tested by experienced owners and breeders and are known to be both safe and suitable for hedgehogs. Deviating from any of the recommendations in this care guide and choosing instead to follow suggestions from a reptile or pet shop however well meaning could endanger the life of your prickle baby. At best they are often out of date and at worst completely wrong.

There are currently some very disreputable breeders selling hedgehogs using on-line classified ads and sadly, they have very little regard for hedgehog welfare or their safety but are concerned only with making as much profit as they can. To protect the general public from such people the UK APH Club Registry made the very difficult decision of banning such people from being able to register their hedgehogs with them and as there were also doubts as to the accuracy of the lineage that was being claimed could not be affiliated to or associated with such duplicity. To conceal this ban and attempt to identify themselves as ethical and responsible these breeders have now been discovered to be issuing FAKE pedigrees. If you suspect your new hoglet may have a pedigree certificate not issued by the UK APH Club Registry and is therefore not registered with them you can request confirmation of authenticity by sending a copy of it to registrations@hedgehogregistry.co.uk

Housing

Ideally they need a Vivarium no smaller than 4 feet in length. A 3 foot vivarium would need to be minimum 18 inches wide. Vivariums are easily stacked and as hedgehogs are solitary creatures and need to be housed alone this makes keeping more than one easier.



A stable temperature is easier to maintain inside a vivarium and although they are fully enclosed ventilation vents at the back ensures humidity levels do not get so high condensation forms making bedding damp or biscuits soggy or the risk of any moulds growing which could lead to respiratory problems, mites, quill loss or fungal infections.

A fully enclosed glass fish tank is not suitable at all and barred cages are not recommended either as hedgehogs love to climb up but cannot climb back down so risk falling and injuring themselves. Maintaining a stable temperature and keeping out draughts would be difficult in an open cage also.



A zoozone 2 is also suitable for keeping a hedgehog but in a cold room may be harder to keep warm and maintain a stable temperature.



Zoozone 1s are far too small for an adult hedgehog.



Cages like this need too much modification to make them suitable for hedgehogs.

Equipment

A small litter tray lined with kitchen roll is an easy, cheap and convenient way to keep your hedgehog clean. Nothing could be simpler. Just roll it up every morning and put it in the bin. As the wheel is placed inside the litter tray any urine or poop passed by your hedgehog whilst running then drains off onto the paper. Any type of cat litter that advertises odour elimination may have chemicals added and any chemical in an enclosed space like a vivarium could be dangerous for a

hedgehog. Little silica gel balls in some cat litter could be accidentally ingested and although not known to be toxic to hedgehogs could be a choking hazard.

Digital scales are very handy to keep an accurate record of your hedgehog's weight gain and if the worse came to the worse weight loss. A healthy hedgehog once full grown has weight fluctuations of up to 30 grams quite regularly and these are nothing to worry about. If weight loss is greater than 30 grams on 2 consecutive occasions and nothing else has changed then a trip to the vets might be necessary. Checking temperatures daily will rule out a hibernation attempt which sometimes has a symptom of weight loss rather than a full blown hibernation attempt when wobbliness also occurs.

Current UK APH Club guidelines stipulate hedgehogs must have an exercise wheel but not until they reach 12 weeks of age. This is contradictory to advice given by American, Danish and German breeders and the UK reasoning is any earlier is considered detrimental to their growth and bone development. I advise supervised use in a playpen from 7 weeks with careful monitoring of weight and full time use after 12 weeks. Hedgehogs can very quickly become obese if fed the wrong food and if they do not have enough exercise. A minimum wheel size of 30cms is required. Anything smaller could harm your hedgehog's spine.

The best wheels for hedgehogs are still the home-made ones and there are a few really great ones out there. Sadly there are also some sellers whose wheels are so bad they are actually dangerous and so inferior they could kill your hedgehog. One identifying factor is these sellers use a "tie dye" effect bowl amongst their other colours. The Savic Roly which is available in pets hops is very difficult to clean, smashes if you drop it and if you have an avid wheeler the ridges cut their feet. Silent Spinners have little holes that could trap tiny toes and are definitely not silent.

I only recommend [Carolina Storm Wheels](#) and these can now be purchased in the UK through the APH Club or via facebook.



Travelling

As with all small animals a trip to the vets may be necessary even if it is just for a nail trim if you cannot manage them yourself so a small pet carrier is essential. A snuggle safe or similar microwaveable heat mat may be necessary in colder weather or some petnaps come with a handy cigar lighter adaptor. African Pygmy Hedgehogs are classed as an “exotic pet” and many small animal practice



vets are unfamiliar with APHs so a vet specialising in exotic pets needs to be located. Ask if your vet has a monthly payment plan for routine care as this can reduce costs. Being an “exotic” many vets will also apply an “exotic” price tag for each consultation so be prepared for bills higher than for eg: a Guinea pig or rabbit.

Bedding

Blankets or cage liners with a pouch or house for sleeping in. (Sawdust, hay, straw, aspen and wood shavings can harbour mites and the oil can cause respiratory problems so should never be used. Shredded paper is also not suitable. Finacard is considered a safe alternative to fleece for hedgies and until recently Carefresh was considered safe but is now no longer recommended. There are many very clever sewers out there but I always use [Quills Delight](#) as Nina owns hedgehogs herself and knows how important it is to have internal seams and no threads as these can easily amputate a hedgehog’s leg as our hair can too for those of us with longer tresses. A hedgehog's bedding needs to be checked daily for anything that may get wound round a leg or toe. Hedgehogs do not chew so would not attempt to remove the thread or hair themselves, it is up to us their human guardians to do things like that for them.



Please be aware that Nina has a waiting list of at least 6 weeks sometimes longer for orders so please contact her for a choice of fabrics ready to order once you know if your baby is a girl or boy.



Nail trims are covered in a section further down but please do not use sand paper or budgie cage liners in your viv to "keep nails short".

Heating

There are numerous different types of thermostats with varying function capabilities and accuracy. Dimming or on/off type thermostats are **not** best suited for hedgehogs as our prickly babies need a stable, ambient temperature which **only** the **Pulse-Proportional** style thermostat can achieve. Choosing different types of bulbs or thermostats to the ones shown here may result in a grumpy, undernourished hedgehog resulting in possible health issues and a shortened life-span.

I recommend a **Ceramic Heat Emitter (CHE)** with a ceramic (plastic will melt) holder to be used in conjunction with a **Habistat Pulse Proportional Thermostat** if you expect the vivarium temperature to fall below 74 degrees Fahrenheit / 24 degrees Centigrade. Most good reptile shops supply them but they are also available much cheaper on-line at Swell Reptiles, eBay and Amazon shops. Don't forget a **thermometer** so you can see at a glance the correct temperature is being maintained at all times by your heat source and thermostat. Please do not let your local pet shop persuade you pulse-proportional is not necessary. They will be happy to sell you something unsuitable or inferior because they have made a sale. You, however, won't be happy if your hedgehog dies because you chose to ignore the years of collective advice and experience from breeders and UK APH Club members who use these products because they know they are the safest, most reliable and most suitable for the well-being of our hedgehogs. All the links go to Swell Reptiles as these are often the cheapest but it is always a good idea to shop around.

Temperatures should be stable for 24 hours or longer prior to bringing your new prickly baby home. He/she should have been living independently his last week with the breeder and be fully weaned, eating and pooping.



A good quality, accurate, easy to read and understand digital thermometer is essential.



Tubular heaters are only suitable for boosting a viv temp by a couple of degrees. Anything more requires a CHE

Petnaps are also suitable for Zoozones

WARNING!



Heat mats catching fire even when controlled by thermostats are being reported amongst both reptile and hedgehog owners. New mats now have a label stating they

must not be covered so should no longer be considered safe for use underneath fleece liners or substrate as they pose a fire hazard so I can no longer recommend using them.

How Much Will It All Cost

This is an example of how your shopping basket from Swell Reptiles should look if purchasing everything new from them. They have a price promise guarantee and it is worth asking on hedgehog groups if anyone is aware of a Swell Reptile voucher code too as they often issue these to us "frequent buyers" and that could reduce your total by 10% - 20%.

A Carolina Storm Wheel is about £34, a basic guinea pig house is about £15, a cat litter tray under £5 and the rest is personal choice for liners, food bowls and toys.

Allow £10 a month for food and I advise saving £10-£20 a month towards future vet fees but which hopefully you will never need.

Starting from scratch with everything brand new equipment will be approximately £200 but finding second hand items in classified ads can reduce the initial cost significantly.

Your Basket

Product	Price	Qty	Subtotal
 VivExotic Repti-Home Vivarium Large Beech 45 in.	£75.99	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£75.99 
 Habistat Pulse-Proportional Thermostat 600w - White.	£39.99	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£39.99 
 Komodo Ceramic Heat Emitter 100w	£17.49	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£17.49 
 Arcadia Ceramic Lamp Holder & Bracket (screw fitting)	£10.39	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£10.39 
 ProRep Heater Guard Standard Rectangular	£10.59	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£10.59 
 Swell Digital Thermometer	£7.49	<input type="text" value="1"/>	£7.49 

[→ Continue shopping](#) [Update basket](#)

GOT A VOUCHER CODE?	BASKET TOTAL
If you have a voucher code enter it here: <input type="text"/>	Subtotal £161.94
	Grand Total £161.94

Keeping your hedgehog at the correct temperature cannot be stressed strongly enough. It is vitally important and using a cheap non digital stick-on analogue thermometer may cost you the life of your hedgehog as a 2 degree variation in accuracy can be the difference between a

happy healthy hedgehog and a dead one. A battery operated digital thermometer will always be more reliable and accurate.

NEVER LET YOUR HEDGEHOG HIBERNATE, IT COULD BE FATAL AND NEVER BATH YOUR HEDGEHOG TO WARM HIM UP

Hibernation Attempts

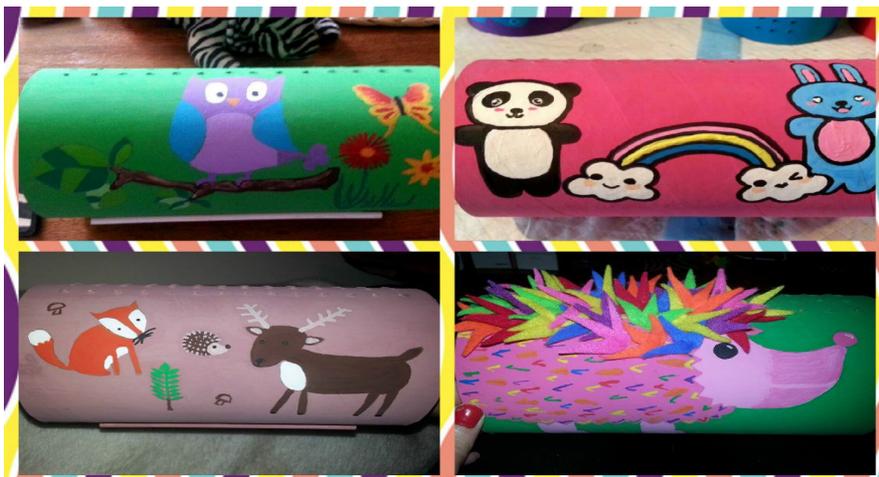
Typical symptoms will include loss of appetite, weight loss, cool tummy and wobbliness and if not remedied immediately will ultimately lead to total unconsciousness and death.

If you suspect a hibernation attempt he needs to be brought back up to his normal temperature slowly and steadily. The safest way to do this is to place him on your chest skin to skin in a warm environment and watch a film. After a couple of hours although he may still be displaying some signs of wobbliness hopefully his body temperature should be noticeably warmer. If not fully recovered stay on the sofa and watch another film. If remaining with your hedgehog for the duration of his recovery is not possible then increase the temperature in the viv to 28 degrees or place him on a snuggle-safe inside a fleece pouch and check regularly. After his first hibernation attempt unfortunately often your hedgehog will likely be predisposed to further attempts so I recommend raising the viv temperature to a slightly warmer 25c permanently.

Toys & Enrichment

Hedgehogs love to play so to enrich their lives they need to have somewhere other than their vivarium or zoo-zone in which to play. A child's ball pit is cheap and ideal. Cardboard tubes, cuddly toys, crinkle or plastic balls to play with and a firm favourite with mine is a forage tray which consists of either small pompoms, finacard, dried leaves or even fleece strips in a cat litter tray. Meal-worms hidden amongst it all makes a great game. Most cat balls are safe just watch out for those containing catnip or which have gaps tiny toes could get caught in. Putting your hedgehog in an enclosed ball of any size is considered cruel.

Alison of [Huffybums Tunnels](#) makes hedgehog friendly tubes.





Feeding

A mix of at least 4 or 5 meat flavoured cat biscuits (not fish) of which protein should be minimum of 30% but no more than 40% as this can cause fatty liver and fat no more than 10% to 15% depending on the age and what your hedgehog needs to maintain a healthy weight. I don't usually introduce light varieties to babies until they are at least 6 months to a year old. **MEAT must be the FIRST or main ingredient NOT CEREAL.** I use James Wellbeloved House Cat and Duck, Harringtons Chicken & Rice, Purina both Sensitive and Indoor varieties and Royal Canin Light. Supermarket own brands, Whiskas or Go-cat are not suitable for hedgehogs as their main ingredient is cereal and Iams seems to make poop very smelly.

Safe Food	Potatoes Pumpkin Raspberries Scrambled egg (no milk) Silk Worms Spinach Sprouts Squash Strawberries Swede Sweet Corn Sweet Potatoes Turkey Turnip Waxworms	Un-Safe Food
Apple		Avocado
Asparagus		Bread
Banana		Chocolate
Blackberries		Chives
Blueberries		Citrus Fruits
Broccoli		Cow's Milk
Cabbage		Dairy Products
Calci-Worms		Dried Fruit
Cantaloupe		Dried Vegetables
Carrots		Fish
Cauliflower		Garden Insects
Celery		Garlic
Cherries		Grape Fruit
Chicken		Grapes
Cockroaches		Legumes
Courgette		Lemons
Cranberries		Limes
Crickets		Mushrooms
Cucumber		Nuts
Green Beans		Onions
Hoppers		Oranges
Kiwi		Peanuts
Locusts		Pineapple
Meal Worms		Pork
Morio Worms		Processed Food
Melon		Raisins
Mince		Rhubarb Leaves
Papaya		Seeds
Peach		Spices
Peas		Spike's Food
Pinkies		Tangerines
Plum		Tomatoes



This is not a definitive list and most shop bought insects are fine. If you are unsure any food or treat is safe then please avoid it. Far better to be safe than sorry.

Hedgehogs need shallow tip-proof feeding bowls similar to baking ramekin dishes or empty Gu dishes. If you decide to make up a mix different to the food your hedgehog came with it must be done gradually to avoid an upset tum.



I also include a pinch of Komodo Tortoise Vegetable Diet supplement 3 times a week on live worms worms.



Animal water bottles are not suitable for hedgehogs as they can damage their teeth or trap their tongues and are an unnatural angle for them to drink from.



Biscuits should have around 10-15% fat & from 30% to around 36% protein, with meat being the first listed ingredient. A mix is considered best as it adds variety and also prevents your hedgehog from getting too set on one particular type of biscuit.

Suggested are, 3 from:
Royal Canin light.
Royal Canin sterilized appetite control.
Applaws senior.
Wainwrights light.
Hills Science Plan light.
Harringtons chicken & rice.
Arden Grange light.
Purina One light.
James Wellbeloved light.



Plus one of the following:
Royal Canin indoor.
James Wellbeloved housecat.
Purina One indoor.

Including an indoor biscuit in the mix can greatly help to reduce odour.

All Sleepy Hollow Hoglets leave with change-over food, a care-pack & lifetime support.



An example of the care pack all Sleepy Hollow hoglets go to their new homes with.

Fresh water must be available at all times

Other food should consist of mince, chicken or egg with vegetables. Hedgehogs are insectivores so live food such as meal worms, morio worms, hoppers or crickets should be fed daily. They will even enjoy the odd pinkie.

I include a tortoise vitamin supplement sprinkled on the live meal worms plus gut loading the meal-worms prior to feeding is a good idea. I also keep a cuttlefish in with my meal-worms because although hedgehogs need calcium all the calcium supplements currently on the market are too strong so meal worms naturally fed on cuttlefish is ideal. Spikes wild hedgehog food should be avoided as the fat content is too high. Hedgehogs must not be given fresh fish and are intolerant to the proteins in lactose in cow's milk but goats milk is fine.



Few advances have been made in APH nutrition since Dr. Graffam's pioneering research

In the wild hedgehogs are insectivores and like many other insectivores they can eat one third of their body weight in insects and food every night. Hedgehogs eat the whole insect including the hard exoskeleton. This exoskeleton or chitin is necessary in a hedgehog's diet as it aids digestion in the same way fiber does in humans. Hedgehogs digest their food with the aid of chitinase and not enzymes as humans and some other mammals. Wild hedgehogs seem to have a preference for soft-bodied insects such as centipedes and millipedes when available. They are also opportunistic omnivores and will feed on small vertebrates such as mice or baby birds if they can catch them or even any carrion they encounter.

Things to AVOID in foods:

Hedgehogs do not have a cecum, which is the lower end of the colon in other animals. Their body is not designed to digest plant matter.

Dried fruits and vegetables sound good in theory but are actually more harmful than good as they pose a choking hazard.

Always read hedgehog food labels carefully. A couple of brands contain dried fruit and vegetables in with their biscuits. Dried fruit is very high in sugar and acid so should not be included in a hedgehogs diet as both sugar and acid is very bad for their teeth and sugar is also very calorific and as obesity is a common problem in hedgehogs absolutely to be avoided. (Fresh apple contains approximately 10% sugar but once dried a whopping 57% and

a, whole apple contains approximately 52 calories but once dried 359 calories). Jacobine Moestrup, a well respected Danish breeder advocates no dried fruit and veg to be included as part of a hedgehogs diet as it is recognised as being a choking hazard over there and is listed as an un-safe food. Numerous hedgehogs have also been reported to have had peanuts stuck in the roof of their mouth. Providing a variety of foods will help to prevent your hedgehog from becoming attached to only one food. You could have a serious problem with your hedgehog not eating if they get attached to one food and that food becomes unavailable or you run out.

Meat protein sources should be the top ingredient. Chicken, chicken meal, and lamb are the best protein sources for insectivores because they are the most easily digested. Pork and beef are cheaper sources of protein but not as easily digested. Foods that contain several protein sources tend to be more beneficial because they provide a wider variety of amino acids that are the building blocks of all cells. Lite forms of cat foods are traditionally used at the maintenance level.

Sadly some hedgehogs whether from a rescue or approved breeder may never be friendly no matter how well handled as a baby or how friendly its parents are. It is always best to meet your hedgehog before purchasing and see how the breeder looks after their hogs, are the hedgehogs clean, is the breeder helpful, will they spend time helping you prepare for your new prickle baby or are they only interested in the money.

If you are not having a hedgehog from Sleepy Hollow here are some questions to ask the breeder.

- Is your breeder a member of the UK APH Club, (I recommend becoming a member yourself if you haven't already) and do they follow their code of ethics?
- How old is the hedgehog?..... It should be over 7 weeks old and a minimum 180 grams in weight.
- How long has it been separated from Mum and siblings? Boys must be separated from Mum and sisters by 6 weeks.
- Is the baby registered?..... If not, why not? It only costs £1 and takes 5 minutes. There is no excuse not to.
- Is there any Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome in it's lineage? Percentages are shown on pedigrees of WHS and any inbreeding.
- What compensation does the breeder offer if after a post mortem (the only way to verify WHS) it is proven to have died from the disease?
- If your circumstances change is your breeder prepared to take your adult hedgehog back? Sadly, too many disreputable or greedy backyard breeders who seem lovely at the point of sale are blinded by £ signs and once money has

exchanged hands relinquish all responsibility or care for the life they brought into the world leaving animal charities and rescues to pick up the pieces.

•Does your breeder offer lifetime support for you and your hedgehog? Ask other buyers if they are still in contact with their breeder or were all calls or messages disregarded and ignored after their purchase.

BEWARE any breeder who demands a deposit before your baby is born, refuses to let you visit and see their own setups or see the actual hoglet you are purchasing or see your baby's Mum. Have they checked you have adequate knowledge yourself to care for their hedgehog and that your set-up is suitable or are they prepared to just accept payment and ship the hedgehog off anywhere in the country via a courier no questions asked.

Approved breeders are required to adhere to an agreed set of guidelines and all their babies come with a pedigree which includes a registration number and a photo of your hedgehog and the name you have chosen for your new prickle baby. There are some breeders who opt not to become "approved" for various reasons but they still certificate their babies and breed ethically but sadly there are also "hedgehog farms" and "hedgehog brokers" where money is the primary goal and not hedgehog welfare. If in doubt ask lots of questions. A tell tale sign of an unethical breeder or trafficker of hedgehogs is requesting a deposit before the hedgehog is born or not being able to provide a photograph of even the parents. "Not believing in the registration scheme" is also a common excuse for being unable to provide lineage or a pedigree for their hedgehogs but is it because they have actually been excluded or banned from obtaining certificates through the UK APH Club because of their known unethical practices? Do they pay for commercial advertising, the type which appears on websites unrelated to hedgehogs because it is a website funded by advertisement revenue. How many hedgehogs would they need to sell to justify and afford such an expense? Probably more than any ordinary hobby breeder could ever produce.

Cleaning

Spot cleaning probably needs to be done daily if you use fleece and the litter tray needs fresh kitchen roll every day and the wheel will almost definitely need cleaning every day as hedgehogs tend to poo while running and then run the poo into a big mess all round the wheel. I use a little anti-bac washing up liquid diluted into a spray bottle and squirt all round the inside. This method avoids getting the bearings on the back wet so lengthens the life span of your wheel. I leave it to soak while I replenish water and food bowls etc. and then it wipes off very easily ready to be put back.

The interior of the viv will only need cleaning once a week if you have a nice clean hedgehog. I use F10 and then once a month I do a deep clean using a steam cleaner. Glass

I find easier to remove from their runners and do in the sink then dry using a clean, soft cloth.

After reading all this and you know that a hedgehog is the right pet for you a list of APH Club approved breeders can be found in the files section of the APH UK Club group.

Taking Your Hedgehog Home

Once home (suitable pet carriers and snuggle safes are covered in a previous paragraph) your baby should be placed in his vivarium and left to settle. 48 hours prior to collection your breeder should have confirmed his living temperature with you was stable and the same as he is already used to.



He may want explore so make sure food water and meal-worms are available but then he will probably sleep. His first toilet may be slightly runny or green and this is perfectly normal and should be back to a normal consistency and colour within 24-48 hours. Hedgehogs are little poo machines when babies so mine usually have a packet of wet ones included in their care packs.

At first he will most likely huff at you as everything is new and strange for him. Your hedgehog should be eating live meal worms quite enthusiastically before he comes to you and this treat will help to gain his confidence in you if you feed him a few by hand each time you get him out. It takes approximately 2 weeks for a hedgehog to become familiar with his new surroundings and start to bond with you.

Pet Shops and reptile shops no matter how well intentioned, how long established or how "reputable" will often give out-dated and inaccurate advice on heating requirements and basic hedgehog care. A hedgehog needs a stable, constant temperature throughout their environment and unlike for a reptile a hot area and cool area would be detrimental to the well being of the hedgehog.

Always be guided by your breeder when making purchases.

Sadly, pet shops generally buy from unethical breeders who also often lack or ignore knowledge about the correct care of hedgehogs and feed the hedgehogs on a poor cheap diet resulting in a weak and sickly hedgehog. Rescuing/buying from pet shops (very

tempting especially when you can see the hedgehog is in bad living conditions and you understandably feel sorry for it) will only encourage the selling and supplying of them by unethical breeders whose sole aim is monetary gain and takes precedence over hedgehog welfare. No reputable breeder sells to pet shops and it is considered so highly unethical that any APH Club Approved Breeder found to be supplying pet shops or brokers will immediately lose their "approved breeder" status.

Anointing

A most unusual phenomenon to experience. After discovering something new your hedgehog may lick or bite the object and then proceed to make a froth which he will then proceed to place on his back using his extra long tongue contorting himself into the most peculiar positions in order to achieve maximum coverage. If the object bleeds colour when wet then the same colour will appear on light coloured quills. Pink cat crinkle balls, blackberries or strawberries all have the capacity for this.



Allergies

Quite a few people new to hedgehogs may experience itching, a rash or even in severe cases, blisters. Some, with perseverance can become tolerant of their own hedgehog but break out once again if handling a new one. Anti-histamines are known to help while resistance is acquired but sadly some may never be able to have skin to skin contact and will always need to use fleece as a barrier.

Quilling

Young hedgehogs have to go through a minimum of 4 episodes of "quilling". Some sail through and others suffer so badly bathing every 3 days and sudocrem on sore patches may be necessary to alleviate the scratching. Normal quilling occurs at approximately 4-6 weeks old, 8-12 weeks old, 6 months and a year. Your hedgehog may display unusual huffiness and grumpiness whilst going through it. Handling should be continued as normal just be aware that the hedgehog is uncomfortable so avoid stroking the quills and a few extra meal-worms will probably be appreciated.

Bathing

Hedgehogs do not wash themselves and if a lump of poo sticks onto one of their quills while running on their wheel they will not clean it off themselves. Their feet and nails get full of poo and need to be cleaned at least once a week in a couple of millimetres of warm

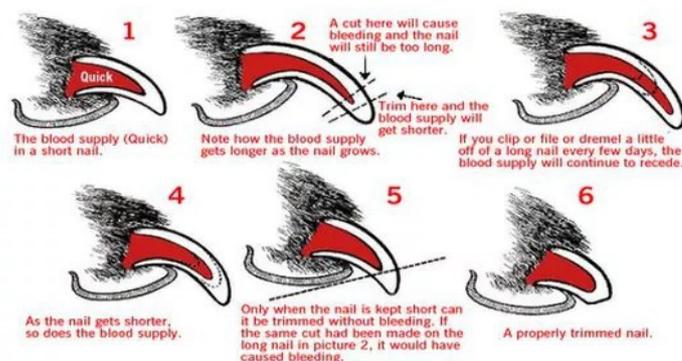
water. I use their litter tray with a cloth in the bottom to make them feel more secure. Soap is not usually necessary. Stubborn pieces can be teased off gently using a toothbrush.

To clean their quills Aveeno Bath and Shower Oil is completely safe and is made from Colloidal Oats. Repeated use of breakfast oats has been known to cause fungal infections. Ground breakfast oats are not Colloidal.



Nail Trims

I have never got on with the clippers that are specifically designed for dogs or small animals and prefer to use an ordinary pair of human nail scissors. After a bath when they are clean of poop and the little blood vessel is more easily visible is the best time I find. I don't endeavour to do all in one go if the hedgehog is resisting and will do a few and do the rest another time. If you never make it a big deal your hedgehog's nail trims he will hopefully use less and less resistance each subsequent time you do it.



If after reading through this care guide you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at sleepyhollowhedgehogs@outlook.com

What to do if your hedgehog is sick or injured and when to call a vet

Constipation/Diarrhoea

Any change in what is normal for your hedgehog needs to be monitored as it could be the first sign something is wrong. It may be something as simple as a bad meal-worm, temperature fluctuations, change in food or home if he is new to you. A little bit of green poo within the first 24 hours of getting your hedgie is normal and all should be back to normal within 24 hours.

Occasionally your spikey friend may get a bout of constipation or diarrhoea. Constipation is not quite as critical as diarrhoea which can become life threatening very quickly if left untreated. Constipation can usually be treated at home without a trip to the vet.

Constipation may be no more than hard or darker coloured pellets instead of the softer mousse like consistency you are used to that gets smeared around the wheel. A spot of blood next to the the poo may indicate excess straining to pass the stool.

A bath would be the first option to try as if you have bathed your hedgie before then chances are he pooped in the water. Bathing often has this effect on them. A little massage of his tummy area will help too.

If you feed dried mealies I would cut them out completely and give a little pumpkin if it is in season as this is very good for sorting out poorly tummies. If not in season baby food containing pumpkin is be fine but check the other ingredients as often the pumpkin is combined with other fruits. Pumpkin is good for both constipation and diarrhoea. Flaxseed oil on biscuits can help or a small portion of wet cat food often makes them looser and will get things moving again..

Diarrhoea is slightly more distressing and can get serious quite quickly as dehydration may occur. Keep weighing your hedgehog to monitor weight loss. If your prickly baby is not eating then some home made chicken soup may tempt him and can also be fed with a syringe. Pumpkin too can be thinned with water and fed with a syringe. Ensure the syringe is directed at the side of your hedgie's mouth, never aim it towards the throat. Adding probiotics to drinking water will also help re-balance everything internally. Aviro plus is safe for hedgehogs.

If nothing you are aware of is different or has changed and after 48 hours your hedgehog is still not eating or drinking normally, there is weightloss, lethargy, splatted out, grumpier than normal, won't un-ball or anything else that is unusual and not normal behaviour for your hedgehog then a trip to the vet is the best course of action and the same day if at all possible. **Three days of diarrhoea with no improvement is too long** so I would advice if no improvement after 48 hours seek professional help.

Mites

Occasionally more than a normal amount of quill loss may occur outside of normal quilling periods accompanied by dry scurfy skin. Before jumping to the conclusion it is mites a very simple test can be carried out first. Hold your hedgehog over a piece of black velvet or something similar. (I use my black ceramic cooker hob). Gently stroke your hedgehog's quills and let the dry skin or dander fall onto the black surface. Often the mites are actually too small to be seen with the naked eye but what is visible is the dandruff apparently moving of it's own volition. This is the evidence of mites you are looking for. Treatment is very easy using Ivermectin drops on the back of the neck. NEVER SUB-CUTANEOUSLY at the vet. eBay and pet shops sell Ivermectin in various strengths. Small birds at 0.01% dosage is 5 drops on the back of the neck and the rabbit and guinea

pig one is stronger and comes in a phial not a dropper bottle and only 2 drops are required. A repeat dosage is necessary and all bedding must be either disposed of or if using fleece they can be frozen for 48 hours to kill any of the little blighters. A deep clean of the viv will also be necessary using F10 or a steam cleaner. If no evidence of mites is apparent keep checking and treat with Colloidal Oat Baths or Aveeno Oil and add a few drops of Flaxseed Oil to his food 3 times a week.

There are several schools of thought on these pesky creatures. Some believe they are a constant companion to your hedgehog but only cause a problem or become apparent if your hedgehog is stressed, ill or just a change in environment. Others believe they are brought onto the hedgehogs environment via us, or bedding or live food. As a preventative measure a dust bath of Diatomaceous Earth seems to work.



What is the normal weight for a hedgehog?

Hedgehogs come in varying “normal” adult weights from as low as 290 grams right up to 600 grams. If your hedgehog is a nice pear-shape when viewed from above, is able to ball up completely and has legs that do not resemble “chicken drumsticks” then whatever weight he is, that is the correct weight for him.

A list of recommended brands of biscuits is in the Care Guide and modifying light or normal varieties should solve any weight problems. “Spikes” wild hedgehog food is not suitable for our APH as the fat content is much too high and recently pre mixed hedgehog biscuits have started appearing on eBay but I recommend mixing your own as then you know exactly what is in it and how fresh it is. I would certainly avoid any that include dried fruit or vegetables as these may pose a choking hazard and have no nutritional value whatsoever. Nor do dried bugs. Yet others guard their ingredients and refuse to divulge the contents of their mix but this too is more to safeguard themselves than offer any benefit to hedgehog welfare. These kinds of people are mainly motivated by profit and exploiting a new hedgehog owner's lack of knowledge or confidence in correct food and not hedgehog welfare. If in doubt please ask and I will help you to make your own mix that is a suitable combination specifically to benefit your own hedgehog. (And save lots of pennies at the same time).

Underweight

A sunken appearance around the middle is too thin. If your hedgehog is not ill, always seems to be active and running on his wheel every night, has a good appetite then adding higher fat content biscuits to his mix will help. If his appetite seems diminished then the temperature in his vivarium may need to be increased to 26 degrees to encourage less sleeping and more eating. Higher fat content treats like pinkies are an excellent way to bulk your hedgie up as are morio worms or wax worms. (Kill them first though as they can nip your hedgehog.) Dried mealworms have a much higher fat content than live food so including dried insects in with his biscuits may also help. Dreamies are a higher fat content than normal kibble and if you are still struggling then a good quality high fat content wet food fed sparingly may help but is not a long term solution.

Overweight

This is a much more prevalent problem most often caused by incorrect feeding and much easier to remedy. Using "light" varieties of biscuits in your mix should solve the problem and perhaps some added free roaming to burn off the extra calories. Around 30 mealworms and other live insects are a normal amount to feed daily and reducing them while your hedgehog loses weight is fine but do not eradicate live food from his diet completely as he needs them for nutritional balance. Hedgehogs need dietary fibre to feel full and lose weight so increasing the amount of low fat insects like silkworms, cockroaches and grasshoppers while decreasing the amount of mealworms, waxworms and other fatty treats is a better way to go. Removing all dried insects from your mix is advisable as they have a much higher fat content than live.



This gorgeous boy arrived at Sleepy Hollow so overweight balling up and wheeling were both impossible for him. We started him off with gentle walking around the lounge and the first time he used his wheel he only managed 0.8 of a kilometer but at the end of his rehabilitation 3 months later he was running 8 kilometers a night. His weight dropped from 668 grams to a much healthier and fitter 546 grams and he was back to pear-shape, able to roll into a ball plus his legs lost their chicken drumstick appearance which you can see in the first image of the collage mapping his progress here.

Amputation

Checking your hedgehog's little toes, feet and legs should become part of your daily routine.

Anything wound round one of their delicate limbs even for a short period of time must be removed immediately as it could result in the blood circulation being cut off, the limb going black and if left untreated sadly amputation of the affected toes, foot or leg at the vet may be the only way to save your hedgehog's life.



Although one vet advised amputation of this hedgehog's foot a 4 hour journey and a second opinion later my vet was able to remove the problem with just a little gas and air and happily the little chap is now fine and made a full recovery.

Lumps and bumps

We don't know why but hedgehogs sadly seem to be particularly prevalent to tumours and cancer. A lump that appears overnight near the mouth area however may not be a tumour but a tooth abscess which they also suffer from quite regularly and would still need treatment at the vet to have it lanced, a course of appropriate antibiotics and some pain killers and hopefully a full recovery made within a few days.

Females suffer from mammary tumours which most vets can remove quite safely and their future outlook is quite positive if there is no return of the tumour.

Tumours on the legs are very difficult to remove as there is very little excess skin to manage a repair after the tumour is removed. If your hedgehog is not in pain and not concerned by the lump then your vet may advise to let it remain and just keep an eye on it.

Occasionally little raggedy tag like lumps may appear on your hedgehogs ears. This is nothing to worry about and they should rub off with a little flaxseed oil or even extra virgin olive oil. The underlying cause needs to be found and this problem is often accompanied by dry scurfy skin so a few drops of flaxseed oil in your hedgehog's diet will prevent them coming back or it could be one of the symptoms of your hedgehog having mites in which case see the section on mites.



Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome (WHS)

This is a gradual, progressive, degenerative, neurological disease of African and European hedgehogs sometimes referred to as progressive paresis/paralysis and symptoms of wobbliness are caused by the slowly degrading muscles and their control perhaps similar to that of MS in

humans. The cause at this time is unknown although it is believed to be genetic. A possible dietary role has been suggested. This horrible neurological disease is only able to be proven through an autopsy on your hedgehog's brain and spinal column which will cost £300 or more. The corroborating evidence of the disease is the confirmation of the presence of lesions in the brain and spinal tissue.

It mainly affects young hedgehogs, 2 years or under and symptoms are very similar to your hedgehog being too cold so any sign of wobbliness should not immediately make you think the worst as here in UK it is still very, very rare. Buying a hedgehog that is registered through the UK APH Club means lineage can be checked and some lines are known to have produced hedgehogs with this illness and responsible breeders have removed any hedgehogs from these lines so checking if one of these lines is or is not in your hedgehog's ancestry is very easy and would be the first thing to do. The latest pedigrees now show if there is any known inbreeding or WHS in your baby's lineage. It is general practice for breeders of hedgehogs who supply pet shops to remain anonymous and hedgehogs bought online from backyard breeders are mostly not certificated so although you will have paid the same price or sometimes more from a pet shop than someone who bought their hedgehog from a named ethical breeder with a good reputation in the hedgehog world there will probably be no pedigree or registration documents to check back on and also no refund if your hedgehog dies.

According to Michael Garner, DVM, Dipl ACVP, and Donnasue Graesser, PhD, cluster patterns in family lineages are apparent, but the occurrence of the disease in different species of hedgehogs suggests that heritability may be influenced by dietary or environmental factors or infectious agents. It must be noted that an infectious agent such as a virus can be transmitted by integration into the subtelomeric region of the chromosome. Thus, an infectious agent like a virus, the cause of multifocal leukoencephalopathy can be transmitted "genetically."

Handling

Hopefully you will have fully bonded with your new spikey baby after a couple of weeks which is roughly how long it takes for a hedgehog to settle into a new home. Some are settled immediately and some take a little longer but what if you have acquired a jumping, clicking, huffing ball of hatred, what then?

Do not despair. There is much you can do. I have rescued a few older ones like this and they have become sociable with calm, quiet, patient handling. If your hedgie eats live food then start by feeding these by hand only. Associating you with treats is a great way to start. Pop a t-shirt with your smell on it in the viv so they get familiar with your scent. A bath is a great way to bond as they climb up the bowl to be rescued by you and they are less likely to ball as well.

Bonding bags which you can pop your hedgehog in and carry around with you will acclimatise them to household noises and give them confidence. I have had great success with cuddle cups placed on the sofa next to me and just sitting quietly with them while

watching TV. Curiosity usually gets the better of them and they soon decide to have a little look and sniff around.

Some hedgehogs may never be fully comfortable being cuddled and instead prefer to free roam and explore. I have found allowing them to do this has then helped them to be less huffy when being picked up. Make sure the room is warm and hog proof and they cannot squeeze into a place where you cannot then retrieve them from if they decide to stay.



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Sleepy Hollow Hedgehogs Questionnaire To Be Completed By All Prospective Owners

This is not a pass or fail test but a guide for me to know how much support you will need in preparing for your prickly baby although all answers can be found in my Care Guide. Babies are £150 and the non-refundable £50 deposit will only be requested once your baby is born and is to ensure your chosen baby is secured for you. Beware any breeder who expects a deposit before your baby has been born or chosen. Rescues are £50 to adopt.

Name

Address.....

Email and telephone number.....

Q1. Have you owned a hedgehog before.....

Q2. How will your hedgehog be housed. Please give size.....

Q3. What will you feed your hedgehog.....

Q4. What temperature will the living conditions of your hedgehog be.....

Q5. What form of heating will you use.....

Q6. Do you accept this hedgehog is "pet only" and cannot be bred from.....

Q7. What bedding will you use.....

Q8. Do you know who your local exotic vet is.....

Q9. Have you received and fully understood the care guide.....

Q10. Have all your questions been fully answered by me.....

Q11. Do you accept that if for any reason you cannot keep your hedgehog you will bring them back to me and they will not be passed to some-one else.....

Signed.....

Date.....

Deposit received £.....