

APHUK Club Code of Ethics

1. Breeders must provide a safe, spacious and comfortable living environment for their hedgehogs. The minimum size of enclosure acceptable for one hedgehog is 3 feet x 1.5 feet, a larger living space is preferred wherever possible.
2. Hedgehogs must have safe bedding (eg fleece liners, finacard, carefresh) as well as a twelve inch solid exercise wheel, and it is recommended to provide additional sources of enrichment such as toys and forage trays. The living area must be kept in a hygienic state, and be kept at a constant warm temperature.
3. Mixed sex pairs of hedgehogs should never be housed together for extended periods, and should only be put together for the purpose of mating. Males (apart from young hoglets) should never be housed together.
4. Some breeders have success in housing females together, but there are risks. If females are kept together then the living space provided will need to be larger, the hedgehogs will need multiples of items such as wheels and food bowls, and the breeder must be prepared to monitor the animals and separate if necessary.
3. Breeders must provide all of their hedgehogs with a nutritious diet- staple diet should be a mix of good quality cat biscuits supplemented with other items such as live insects, meats, egg, fruit and vegetables. The animals must be provided with fresh food and water every day.
4. The health of the hedgehogs should always be a priority and should be continuously monitored; in the event that an animal appears to be unwell it should be seen by a veterinarian timeously. Animals that are suspected to be unwell or injured should never be bred or sold until such times as their health issues have been adequately addressed.
5. All breeding hedgehogs and their offspring should be registered to prevent inbreeding, and to allow any genetic health issues that may crop up to be investigated. There is a lot of emphasis placed by breeders in general on colour. It is most important to breed from healthy hedgehogs that have sound temperament and at least some lineage.
6. We would seek to dissuade breeders from buying breeding hogs from pet shops, or from breeding from animals of unknown origin. In the event that consideration is given to breeding from imported animals we would ask that lineage, health and breeder reputation are taken into consideration; importing does not in itself guarantee improved blood lines.
7. Animals should never be inbred (paired to closely related hogs such as sibling, parent, and grandparent). Any inbred litters born due to accidental pairings must be registered as pet only.

8. Pairing more distant relations (eg with a shared great-great-grandparent) would be classed as line breeding, and this is used as a technique by some experienced breeders in order to try to improve certain traits in that line. Line breeding should not however be done for reasons of convenience, due to the limited genetics that you may have within your own herd. In general we would discourage line breeding unless you are an experienced breeder and have clear goals in mind.
9. The minimum age for pairing males is 5 months. The minimum age for pairing females is 6 months.
10. Small or thin females may experience difficulties with birth and/or feeding their litter. The absolute minimum breeding weight for females is 300 g. Many breeders opt to use a slightly higher threshold, eg 320 or 350 g.
11. Females need to have given birth to their first litter by the time that they are a year old or it then becomes dangerous for them to give birth due to changes in their biology; therefore they need to be successfully paired for the first time by around 10 months.
12. Females need time to recuperate between litters; the minimum gap between birth of a litter and the next pairing should be 6 months if the litter contains 4 or less babies, and a minimum of 7 months if the litter contains 5 or more babies.
13. Females should not have more than 4 litters over the duration of their lifespan. They are normally retired at around the age of 2.5 years; females should certainly have given birth to their final litter before they attain the age of three years as an absolute maximum.
14. New babies should not be handled for the first 14 days of life and breeders should not disturb the nest area (unless there is some form of emergency situation) during that period.
15. We are aware that some experienced breeders do have a quick peek at the babies without touching from the 10-day mark however this is something we would not encourage inexperienced breeders to attempt; there is a chance of upsetting the mother, leading to tragedy, particularly with first time mothers.
16. In the sad event that a female destroys her litter then there should be a minimum gap of 3 months left between the destruction of the litter and re-pairing of the female.
17. A female should not be allowed to continue destroying litter after litter, and we feel that it is unacceptable to re-pair an animal that has destroyed 3 litters. Many breeders choose to stop at the point when the female has destroyed 2 litters.

18. In the event that a female has abandoned her litter then it is likely that she will have expended significant resources in rearing the litter for a period of time. The minimum acceptable period between the litter being abandoned and the female being re-paired is judged to be three months with the caveat that longer is desirable, proportionate with the length of time that the female nursed the babies before she abandoned them.
19. If a mating is judged to have been unsuccessful (the female didn't 'take', ie no evidence of a pregnancy or birth) then the female may be re-paired quickly; however it is not advisable to re-pair before day 55 in case her pregnancy has gone overdue.
20. Hoglets should not be sent to their new homes any younger than 6.5 weeks and not weighing any less than 120 grammes. The majority of breeders use the guideline of 7 to 8 weeks and minimum weight 150 grammes. Care should be taken to ensure that babies are feeding well and fully independent prior to them leaving the breeder.
21. Breeders should spend time daily handling the hoglets to make them tame; an unhandleable hoglet should not be sold to an inexperienced owner. We do appreciate that hogs often display some changes in behaviour when they are settling into their new homes, and that breeders cannot predict exactly how they will behave.
22. Male hoglets need to be separated from their mothers and sisters by the age of 6 weeks due to risk of mating. Some precocious male babies may need to be removed from the nest slightly earlier if they begin to display courtship behaviour.
23. Breeders should ensure that the individuals that they sell their hoglets to have an understanding of the animals' care needs, and should seek to fill in any gaps in knowledge. Breeders are always within their rights to refuse or cancel a sale if they have any doubts about the prospective buyer's motivations or ethics.
24. At least two weeks' worth of changeover food and a care sheet should be provided with the hoglet. Breeders are also encouraged to provide a small care pack of essential items.
25. Breeders should make themselves available to those who have bought hogs from them, in order to provide ongoing advice and support.
26. In the event that an owner needs to re-home an animal then its breeder should be prepared to either take the animal back or to help the owner to find a new, suitable home.
27. It is best practice for breeders to provide a health guarantee against wobbly hedgehog syndrome, stating that they will provide either a replacement hedgehog or a refund if an animal that they have bred died due to this disease. Please note that the disease can only

be confirmed by necropsy after the hedgehog has died, and that breeders are not obliged to pay the fee to have the necropsy undertaken.

28. It is best practice for breeders to provide a refund or a replacement hoglet in the event that an animal that they have bred dies due to a congenital health issue before the age of six months.
29. Hand reared hoglets may be affected in the longer term by health and/or behavioural issues. For this reason hand rears are not normally judged to be suitable for breeding. We would also encourage breeders to bear these issues in mind when considering potential homes for hand rears. It is desirable to foster orphaned hoglets into another litter wherever possible.
30. The re-homing of ex-breeding hogs to make room for younger animals is a controversial issue. If you are in the practice of re-homing your retired animals then we would ask that you spend time vetting potential owners to find your retirees the very best homes and that you provide changeover food, care information and ongoing support to the retiree's new owner.
31. Selling to pet shops or pet traders is viewed in a very negative way. Approved breeders must not do so.
32. We hope that new and experienced breeders alike will be open to engaging in a continuous process of learning and development, through ongoing research and the dissemination of new ideas and practices.