

Lifespan

With good care the average lifespan is about 4-6 years.

Behaviors

African pygmy hedgehogs are personable little pets that have gained a lot of popularity in the US. They are most active in the evenings and mornings and sleep during most of the day. While scared they will curl into a tight ball with their quills erect and make a hissing noise to ward off predators. If they are comfortable they will unroll and lay their quills down and can be held and pet. There are no quills on the face or belly.



Housing

Hedgehogs need a solid bottom cage that is at least three feet long and two feet wide. A wheel, one that is solid plastic rather than wire, should be provided for exercise and should be at least 11" in diameter. An exercise ball (giant or mega size) allows them to run around the house safely. Carefresh (recycled shredded paper) bedding or layers of fleece bedding are the best options to use at the bottom of the cage. There should be several hides that your hedgehog can get completely underneath to hide and sleep. Water bottles or heavy water bowls can be used.

Towels, blankets, or anything with threads can get caught around the legs and constrict enough to damage blood flow to the foot so these should not be used. Even human hairs can cause this effect so check the legs and feet regularly.

Hedgehogs are sensitive to low temperatures so they should have a heat source (heat lamp or heating pad) that keeps part of the cage at at least 80°F. Below 70°F causes hibernation attempts, which lead to lethargy, not eating and quite frequently illness and even death.

Diet and Nutrition

The natural diet of hedgehogs is difficult to duplicate as they are insectivorous omnivores and there is little research to develop an appropriate diet for them. There are commercial hedgehog foods, but they're not always available at some pet stores, and they may not be a correct formulation since little research has been done. A meat or chicken based dry cat food that is high in protein is a decent alternative. Dry food should be the primary portion of your pet's diet.

Live mealworms and crickets are an excellent supplement to the diet and provide enrichment. However, they can get spoiled on mealworms and try to only eat those, which is not a complete diet and will contribute to obesity. Your hedgehog should have no more than 10 mealworms 2-3 times a week.

Hedgehogs are prone to obesity so care must be taken not to allow your hedgehog to get chubby!

Common Illnesses

Skin problems: Mites are somewhat common with hedgehogs and cause flaky skin, raggedy ear edges, and quills that fall out very easily. Fungus/ringworm can cause similar symptoms as well. Both mites and fungal problems can be treated so if poor skin health symptoms are noted they should be seen by a vet.

Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome is caused by a degenerative neuropathy in the spine. It causes hedgehogs to first appear wobbly like they are stumbling or falling over as they walk. Unfortunately it is progressive with no known treatment and eventually causes paralysis and death.

Cancer is very common in African Pygmy Hedgehogs and it is suspected that there is a genetic component to some of the many types of cancers that hedgehogs get. There can be lumps and bumps that arise in many areas of the body including internally, on the jaw, in the skin, etc.