



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

Dr. GREGORY RICH
Dr. LESLIE PENCE
www.avianandexoticvet.com

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES
504.835.8508

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are a small, insectivorous (insect eating) mammal that can be found throughout the world. They are native to England, Europe, Africa and Asia. The hedgehog that is now kept as a pet in North America is the Pygmy Hedgehog from Central Africa.

The average African Pygmy Hedgehog weighs about ½ to 1-¼ pounds and is 5 to 8 inches long - about the size of a Guinea Pig. There are some that will grow to as much as 1 ¾ to 2 pounds (without being fat) while others are as little as 6 or 7 ounces. Petting a friendly hedgehog can be compared to petting a hairbrush - bristly, not prickly.

They have a quiet, gentle, disposition that makes them a true delight to own and hold. They love to play with tunnels, mazes and specially designed hedgehog wheels.

What Kind of Housing Will He Require?

Your hedgehog will require a secure home since they are very good climbers and can easily escape from open-topped cages that are designed for animals such as guinea pigs and rabbits. If you do use a cage with an open top, it must have slippery sides that are at least 12" high and a floor space of at least 16" x 24". A 20-gallon aquarium is ideal. It must also have good circulation and be well lit but not exposed to direct sunlight during the daytime.

Cage Placement

Place your hedgehogs new home in a comfortable, warm, well lit area that is free of drafts and direct sunlight. They are best kept at temperatures of between 68-80 degrees Fahrenheit. Hedgehogs are very sensitive to cold temperatures. In addition to a cage, your hedgehog will require the following accessories:

Bedding: Aspen, pine or white shavings, pellets or recycled products (NOT CEDAR!) are by far the best choice for bedding material. Place approximately two inches of bedding material evenly over the floor of the cage. Change bedding weekly or more often if needed.

Food Bowl: The food bowl needs to be fairly wide and heavy to prevent your pet from dumping out its contents and using it as a toy. Small ceramic crocks that are designed for small rodents are perfect food dishes for hedgehogs. The width or diameter of the dish can be 3 to 6 inches and it should be no more than 3 inches high.

Water Bottle: Water bottles are preferred over open dishes. Hedgehogs love to fill open water dishes with shavings and this prevents them from getting enough water to drink.

Litter box: Your pet will use a litter box if you provide it with one. A small box that is 2" deep x 6" x 9", half filled with dust free cat litter does very nicely. Non-clumping cat litter is the safest choice.

Toys: If you choose, you can also add a few toys for your hedgehog to play with. An exercise wheel is an excellent addition and will help him to stay healthy and trim. Although a guinea pig wheel will suffice, there are now specially designed Hedgehog Wheels available from many pet suppliers. These are safer for your pet since they have a solid or mesh-covered running surface rather than the more common metal bars which they sometimes get their long legs caught in.

Diet: EQUAL PARTS of a High quality hedgehog diet with a High Quality LOW FAT Feline Diet should always be available. Mealworms, crickets, fresh diced fruit, finely chopped hard boiled eggs, bananas, carrots, chopped up leafy greens and apples may be offered 3-4 times weekly.

Remove any uneaten food every 12-24 hours.

Clean the entire habitat and it's contents with mild soap and water every week. Rinse well and allow to dry completely before returning the hedgehog to its habitat. Wash your hands before and after handling your hedgehog and the habitat contents.

We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!

