

tiggyhogs
AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOGS

CARE PACK

for an African Pygmy Hedgehog



CARE SHEET FOR AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOGS

Bringing your new pet home can be very traumatic for the hedgehog and the owner. He/she will be in new surroundings and have new tastes and smells to grow accustomed to, your baby will also have just been removed from its mother and siblings. However with patience, understanding and gentle handling, your hedgehog will make a lovely new pet, there are some things you can do to help your new friend through this unsettling period.

- Continue to feed your hedgehog some of its staple food can help minimise stress, and so I will give you a supply of your hedgehog's current food.
- You can put an old, worn item of your clothing in with your hedgehog for the first few days, so he/she can get used to your scent.
- Using the same substrate as I do will also help.

It is OK to handle your hedgehog when you first bring them home, but please refrain from too much handling. Give them time to settle in. He/she might be jumpy as everything is new, so keep noise and movement to a minimum if possible. It may take a few days for your hedgehog to grow accustomed to its new environment. It is important to handle him/her through this time. All hogs are different and some will change over without any problems, but some may become a little shy and/or withdrawn the first few days.

HOW TO HANDLE YOUR NEW PET

You can pick up your hedgehog by using a 'scooping' technique. This is done by placing your up-turned palms either side of its body and bringing them together under the hog's belly. Your hedgehog may well huff and hiss or even roll into a ball. This is perfectly normal, it is important that you take no notice and continue to pick them up, even if you need to use gloves at first. As soon as the hedgehog realises that you mean it no harm this behaviour will stop. A good way of encouraging the bonding process is by bribery! Most hedgehogs love mealworms and a tasty hand-fed morsel will teach your hedgehog that you are a friend.



HOUSING

- Vivariums – This is the most commonly used enclosure for Hedgehogs and makes a very good home. Generally a minimum of 3 foot, 4 foot being the ideal, and above are recommended. They are wooden and easy to clean. The benefits are they are easy to customise, keep in warmth and are stackable. The main downside to vivs is the air flow and ventilation. This is normally overcome by simply adding extra vents to the viv, or making the doors from mesh (fly mesh is recommended).
- A large Zoozone 2 – make another good choice of enclosure. They are plastic with an open vented roof and are easy to clean. Their drawback is that they are not designed to be stacked on top of each other. These are an ideal cage for people with only one hedgehog and can be kept in a warm, heat controlled room.
- You can also make your own enclosure; something similar to a rabbit hutch is what most people make. Please remember not to use wide-gapped wire such as chicken wire on the doors, as this can be climbed. Similar to a vivarium, use mesh.
- Minimum size for an enclosure is 3' x 1½' but 4ft would be the recommended.
- Your hedgehog's home should be placed away from draughts and kept between 21-24°C. It should be lit for 12 hours per day using natural or artificial light, although kept out of direct sunlight.

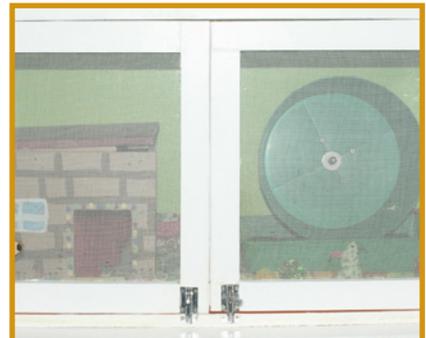
STACKED VIVARIUMS



CUSTOMISED VIVARIUMS



MESH DOORS



ZOOZONE 2



SUBSTRATES AND BEDDING/NESTING MATERIAL

There are several options for substrates and bedding, some of which are listed below :-

- Blanket / Fleece – This is only an option if you manage to litter train your hedgehog. The fleece needs to be washed as required and spare fleeces need to be kept in case of accidents and between washes.
- Carefresh – Is reputed to be one of the best beddings on the market. It absorbs liquids very well, it is also dust extracted. It also absorbs odour. Good for hedgehogs with dust allergies, although as particulate bedding, it contains the same dangers for male hedgehogs.
- Back2Nature – It is also dust extracted and good for hedgehogs with dust allergies.
- Finacard – Is a shredded, dust extracted cardboard that can only be purchased via their website (www.finacard.co.uk). This is what I use in my litter trays.
- Newspaper – Simple and free, it is also dust free and makes a good base. The downside is that unlike all the other substrates, the newspaper must be changed everyday where as the others may be spot cleaned every day and renewed on a weekly basis.
- For bedding/nesting materials, you can use shredded paper towels, newspaper or paper flakes.

Personally, I use cotton or fleece liners and pouches and have kitchen roll or Finacard in my litter trays.

BLANKET/FLEECE



CAREFRESH



FINACARD



BACK2NATURE



HIDES

Again there are a few options, and here it all depends on personal choice.

- Plastic Igloos – These igloos, such as Super Pet or Savic, found in Pets at Home, are made of plastic, come in a variety of shades, and are easy to clean. Care must be taken with regards to condensation due to heating, as well as checking for sharp edges prior to offering it to your hog.
- Habba Huts – These are an alternative to the standard houses used. Beware of splinters.
- Sleeping Pouch / Hedgie Bag – Hedgehogs do like these, and they have the added benefit of being able to pick them out of the enclosure completely with the hog inside. There is one thing to be aware of with these if using sawdust, it will cling to the sides of the pouch and spread around the house. They also come in the form of 'Hedgie Hats', similar to a toddler's hat, and can be both bought online, or home made.
- Log cabins – Designed for rabbits or guinea pigs, but hedgehogs really like them too. They are also excellent as a nest box if the lid is removable. These are also made by people within the hedgehog community.

SUPER PET IGLOO



SAVIC IGLOO



SLEEPING POUCH



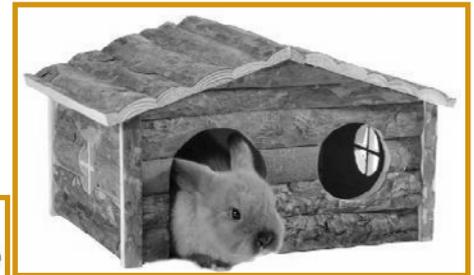
HABBA HUT



PLASTIC HUT



LOG CABIN



FOOD GUIDE

I will supply some staple food for your hedgehog for you to take home. I use a mix of types of dry cat food as I feel the hedgehogs like a variety. We use a mix to balance the diet but this also allows for if a biscuit gets changed / discontinued you're not left with a hog that won't eat anything. It is important to remember that fish based cat foods are not to be fed to your pet as there have been reports from America that some hedgehogs have had very bad reactions to fish and seafood based foods. Please do not use ANY fish based foods. Hedgehogs are also lactose intolerant, so should have no foods that contain milk or its derivatives.

This is my biscuit mix that all my hogs have:

- 40% James Wellbeloved Senior/Light Lamb & Rice or Senior/Light Turkey & Rice
- 40% Applaws Grain Free Chicken with Extra Lamb
- 20% Purina One Indoor Formula

This is my biscuit mix that all my hogs have. I would recommend that this is not changed until at least 16wks of age. At this age they have only just been weaned and so their diet should not be changed immediately.

When choosing a food look to see that it should ideally be between 30-34% protein, and between 10-15% fat. Also ensure that the first ingredient is meat as this is better nutritionally than meatmeal. Avoid using foods that contain cereals as the first ingredient as primary food sources, it is acceptable to have one 'junk' food, but the majority of your mix should be good quality kibble.



FOOD GUIDE CONTINUED

As a supplement:-

- I feed cooked meat every day, this includes chicken or beef, lamb or turkey mince. With this, I also offer fruit and vegetables to make a teaspoon of mixed meat, fruit and vegetables.
- Good examples of fresh fruit and vegetables are strawberry, apple, potato, sweet potato, carrot, cucumber, pear, mashed banana, broccoli, cauliflower, squash, melon, bell pepper, peas and pumpkin.
- Some hedgehogs will eat the vegetables and fruit, others will not.
- I also free-feed live mealworms to my hedgehogs, and hoglets should be free-fed live mealworms until they gain their wheel. For hogs on a diet, this may be reduced to a smaller number per day. You can also try crickets, locusts, cockroaches, or wax worms (the latter in moderation as they are extremely high in fat).
- Insect fare can be fed live, dried or moist in cans. In the case of dried insects, they should be fed in moderation (1-4 per day) as there have been problems regarding impaction of the gut caused by the feeding of dried insects due to their lack of moisture. Live food is naturally better as they can be gut-loaded prior to feeding to offer a better nutrient content for your hog.
- If you are concerned about handling live food, tweezers can be used to pick them up. They can also be placed in the fridge to slow their movements, or the freezer to kill them prior to feeding (thaw before offering to your hedgehog).
- Scrambled egg (milk free) and boiled eggs are also appreciated by hedgehogs.
- Hedgehogs should never be fed avocados, onions, garlic, grapes, raisins or sultanas, chocolate, peanuts & other legumes or other seeds & nuts (choking hazard), citrus fruits & pineapple, any raw meat or raw egg yolks, or any canned or processed food

TOYS

MEALWORMS



CRICKETS



CHICKEN



Although you may interact with your hedgehog for extensive amounts of time, the fact is sooner or later it will be bedtime for you and your hog will still be awake. You will need something to stop it becoming bored during the late hours of the night.

A wheel is considered a requirement, and hogs have been recorded as running as far as 10km per night on their wheels. For my hogs i use and recommend the Tic Tac Wheel™ but there are some others on the market that are also very good such as the large Carolina Storm wheel or a bucket wheel, which are 12”.

Other toys include:-

TIC TAC WHEEL™



CAROLINA STORM /BUCKET WHEEL



Tunnels – Seagrass, cardboard and plastic tunnels designed for ferrets and guinea pigs can be used, as can PVC pipe (4” diameter or more) segments such as T-junctions and elbow bends. I also use hand-made fabric tunnels.

Toys – You can use the majority of cat, ferret, rat or miniature dog sized toys. Beware of gaps that might trap hog-feet, or toys that make loud, startling noises – bells, bead rattles, etc are fine however. Keep in mind that hogs do not gnaw like rodents, nor do they appear to be affected by catnip like cats (although there is also no evidence that they aren’t negatively affected – most appear to ignore the scent).

Whilst out of their enclosure, a hedgehog likes nothing better than running around the floor exploring. Playpens (made from child ball pits or paddling pools, modified rabbit runs, or Pets at Home hamster play pens – watch for climbing bars/digging under) filled with tunnels and toys can be used if you would rather the hedgehog did not have the freedom to roam. They will also enjoy running around you and climbing all over you, often choosing to go to sleep on your shoulder, or trying to hide in your clothing.

If allowing free-roaming, take care when opening doors and block off all holes, no matter how small, including beneath sofas, and around fireplaces.



TEMPERATURE

Aph are exotic animals and will need to be kept in a heated environment. This is best achieved by housing them in a viv where it is simple to heat. I would recommend a 150w ceramic heat emitting bulb to be placed in the middle of the viv and attached to a pulse thermostat. This is set as 21°C and left on 24/7. The thermostat will turn the bulb on and off as required. Some hogs prefer it a little warmer and you may need to increase the temperature over the colder months. Remember, if the temperature drops below 21°C then there is a chance that your hog will try to hibernate. This can be fatal to this type of hog and must not be allowed to happen. In very hot weather, you can use a fan (avoid direct drafts), offer chilled ice packs (wrapped in fleece), or smooth ceramic tiles for cooling to avoid overheating.

QUILLING

Quilling is a term that refers to the shedding of a set of quills and growing in a new set. This occurs several times in a young hedgehog's life, typically at 2-3 weeks, 5 weeks, and 8-12 weeks of age. Typical signs of quilling include irritability, dropped quills, and new quill points breaking through the skin and dry skin may be visible. This is a normal occurrence for hedgehogs, similar to teething in infants. Quilling is a gradual process, and should include new quills replacing the old quills within a very short period of time after they shed. Because of this, there are no bald spots or thinning areas visible in the hedgehogs' quill coat. Any bald spots are signs of a problem that is not related to normal quilling.

Behaviour during quilling is often very antisocial. However, if you stop to think about what the hedgehog is going through during this time, especially the final quilling (usually around 8-12 weeks of age), it is very understandable why they are uncomfortable. Quilling is a major event in their life that is comparable to cutting teeth all over your entire body, plus hitting puberty at the same time. The good news is that they will get over it. This phase varies in length between hedgehogs, some are over it as short as 4-5 days, and others can take over 4 weeks. However, if you continue to handle, they will improve again and be very near their normal non-quilling temperament.

There are a few things that you can do to help ease the stress and discomfort of quilling. While I don't normally recommend bathing your hedgehog too often, during quilling baths can be helpful in soothing the hedgehogs' skin. I recommend warm baths with either oatmeal or Aveeno products approximately once every week, but only if your hedgehog appears very uncomfortable. You can also make your own oatmeal baths, using porridge oats placed inside some muslin (or similar) and held under the running tap.

Also, adding a tablespoon or so of olive oil, flaxseed oil, or other non-toxic, non-flavoured edible oil to some fresh meat and insects. This can help in the general care and softening of their skin which in turn can help them be more comfortable during the quilling process.



CLEANING YOUR HEDGEHOG OUT

Hedgehogs should be cleaned out completely on a weekly basis. Remove all substrate and bedding, and clean out with a pet safe disinfectant, for this I use Flash anti-bac wipes (green packet) and Dettol Mould And Mildew Remover. Once dry, then replace the substrate with fresh. Each day you will need to spot clean the enclosure by cleaning up any waste (place into the litter tray, this will encourage them to use the tray). You will also need to clean the food and water bowl, wheels and replace newspaper (if used). Wheels have to be cleaned daily as the hogs will often wee and poo on them whilst exercising. This is easily done with hot water, disinfectant or washing up liquid and a soft brush.



BATHING YOUR HEDGEHOG

Your hedgehog may need a bath every now and again. This is done by filling a sink with warm (not hot) water shallow enough for the hedgehog's head to be above the water. Then scoop some water in a cup (or cupped hand) and tip all over the hedgehog avoiding the face. I use a soft or baby toothbrush to scrub the quills as and when needed. I also use Aveeno oil (supplied in care pack, see right) in the water to help with dry skin. You have to be careful after bathing as they can catch a cold, especially during the winter. Please ensure that you keep your hedgehog in a warm towel when bathed, keep it snuggled and keep blotting them dry. You can then put the hedgehog back in their home.



ADDITIONAL

For more updates and information please join my facebook group – Tiggyhogs. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/422487384487603/>
Or follow my Twitter <https://twitter.com/TiggyHogs>

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<http://www.tiggyhogs.com>