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HOUSING

CAGE

Specs

Cages must be a minimum of 4 square feet per hedgehog. Hedgehogs cannot climb or jump vertically so they rely on lots of floor space. All areas that your hedgehog has access to should be regularly checked for cords, chew marks, and places where they can get stuck. Hedgehogs love to explore but are not very agile and can get in trouble easily.

Temperature

The temperature inside the cage should always be between 72° and 80° F with the humidity between 30% and 70%

Material

Wider cages with lots of floor space are preferable since hedgehogs are terrible climbers and cannot jump vertically. All cage floors, ramps, and levels should be solid or covered with fleece since standing on wire can cause injuries and bumblefoot.

BEDDING

MNPPR strongly recommends avoiding all wood-based beddings due to the general sensitivity of pocket pets. We like to use fleece to line the cage and cover any exposed wire floors, then use *unscented* paper bedding as litter placed in a litter box. When the fleece is soiled, simply throw it in the wash and replace it as needed. Some hedgehogs can be trained to use a litter box, which can make cleaning even easier.



fleece



pelleted paper



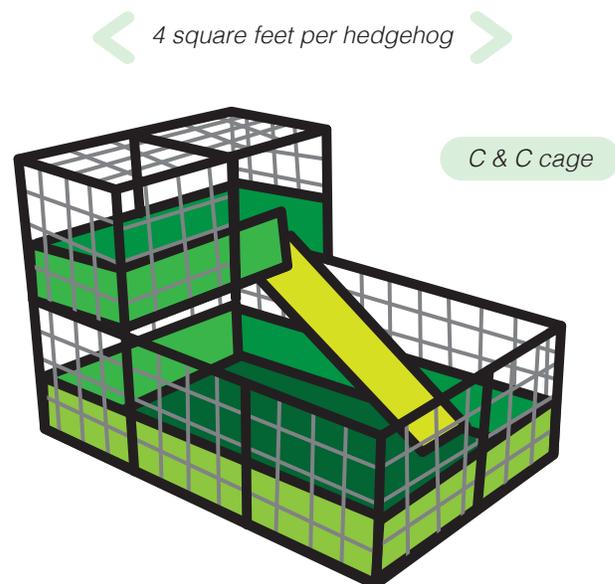
soft recycled paper



shredded paper

Examples

One of the best cage options is a homemade cage called a C&C (cubes and coroplast) cage. They are fairly easy to make and are quite inexpensive compared to cages sold at pet stores. They are also very easy to clean and provide appropriate space. The bigger the better! If you decide to put in a ramp to add a second story, make sure it is long with a gradual incline and traction on the bottom so your hedgehog can safely use it. Midwest Guinea Habitat, Living World Deluxe XL, and Midwest Critter Nations are also good options.



C & C cage



HOUSING

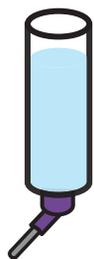
FURNISHINGS

Essentials

Set your hedgehog's cage up with the primary essentials including a water bottle, food bowl, at least one shelter/hide, a wheel large enough for your hedgehog to comfortably run in, and a bed and/or layers of fleece to burrow and sleep in. Some people choose to litter train their hedgehogs. If you do, be sure to incorporate at least one litter box that is large enough for your pet to comfortably sit in.

Variety

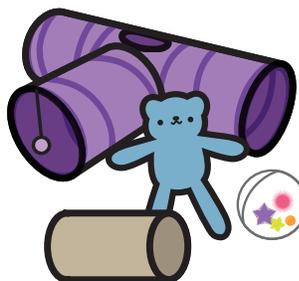
It is important to provide a variety of toys, beds, and fun stuff you can rotate to keep your hedgehog interested. Good examples include hiding places, burrowing bags, grass huts, cardboard boxes, tunnels, stuffed animals, and balls. Visit the homemade toys tab on our website for more ideas.



water bottle



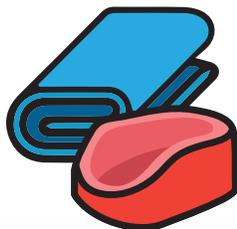
food dish



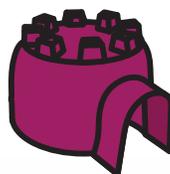
toys



litter box



beds



hides



wheel



FEEDING

DIET

Staple Diet

To provide the most well-rounded diet, MNPPR recommends feeding high-quality kibble cat food, high-quality hedgehog food, or a mix of both. Any food used must have over 20% protein and 5 - 15% fat. Be sure to look at the ingredients and do not purchase anything that has corn as one of the main ingredients. Because hedgehogs can be picky eaters, you may need to experiment with different brands or mix brands before finding one they like.

Treats

Variety in treats can help provide your hedgehog with a more balanced diet.

SAFE TREATS

<i>apple</i>	<i>honeydew</i>
<i>banana</i>	<i>mango</i>
<i>bell peppers</i>	<i>papaya</i>
<i>blueberries</i>	<i>pineapple</i>
<i>cantaloupe</i>	<i>raspberries</i>
<i>cat treats</i>	<i>strawberries</i>
<i>canned cat food</i>	<i>watermelon</i>
<i>ferret treats</i>	
<i>cooked, diced carrots</i>	
<i>grilled, unseasoned chicken</i>	
<i>grilled, unseasoned salmon</i>	
<i>unseasoned scrambled eggs</i>	

UNSAFE TREATS

<i>apple seeds</i>	<i>nuts</i>
<i>avocado</i>	<i>onions</i>
<i>chocolate</i>	<i>processed meat</i>
<i>citrus</i>	<i>raisins</i>
<i>dairy products</i>	<i>raw eggs</i>
<i>fizzy drinks</i>	<i>raw meat</i>
<i>garlic</i>	
<i>grapes</i>	
<i>anything with added sugar</i>	

SAFE INSECTS

STORE-BOUGHT ONLY
(LIVE OR FREEZE-DRIED)

crickets
mealworms
wax worms

UNSAFE INSECTS

ANY WILD CAUGHT INSECTS



EXERCISE

EXERCISE

Activity

Hedgehogs are naturally nocturnal, so spending time with them in the evenings and at nighttime is the most rewarding. Hedgehogs are not highly energetic animals but they do require daily exercise and mental stimulation.

Floortime

Floortime and exercise are very important for a hedgehog. Time outside the cage for a hedgehog should be spent running around and exploring. They should get a minimum of one hour per day of playtime with you outside their cage, even if they have a very large habitat.

Play

Some fun things to try with your hedgehog are making a maze, creating obstacle courses, or a burrowing pit. While hedgehogs might consider themselves to be daredevils it is important to remember that they are clumsy creatures and can easily fall or even walk off of ramps or high furniture.

Wheels

All hedgehogs require a wheel to exercise. Any wheel should have a solid base and be of the appropriate size for your pet. Never use wire or mesh wheels since tails, toes and other body parts can get stuck in the mesh or bars and cause serious injuries.

Exercise Balls

Do not use an exercise ball for your hedgehog.

Pet-Proofing

Make sure to pet-proof before play by covering outlets and cords, putting away anything you don't want chewed on, moving houseplants, blocking any small space you cannot reach into such as under the fridge, and securing other pets in a different area or room. Exercise pens can be extremely useful in keeping your pet secure while providing lots of room to run



SOCIAL NEEDS

COMPANIONSHIP

Mental Stimulation

Hedgehogs are naturally solitary and shy animals and will need time to become comfortable around you. One of the best ways to bond is to put your hedgehog in a cuddle sack or blanket and hang out on the couch. Giving them plenty of fleece to burrow in will help them feel more secure. As they age, most hedgehogs have less energy and may take more time to bond with people.

Bonded Buddies

Due to their independent nature, hedgehogs are happiest living alone and will fight if they are housed with another hedgehog.

BONDING WITH YOUR HEDGEHOG

Key Components of Training

**TRUST • POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT
CONSISTENCY • REPETITION • PATIENCE**

Tips

Every time you approach your hedgehog's habitat, bring a small treat for your pet so they learn to associate you with pleasant things and look forward to your visits. Never feed treats through cage bars since this can encourage your pet to nip fingers. Offer treats with an open palm when possible.

Do an activity where your hedgehog can hear your voice - read out loud, talk on the phone, or just talk to your hedgehog. They love stories!

Spend time around your hedgehog in a location that allows them to come to you if they want to be pet but gives them space to leave if they don't feel like being touched.

Never grab your hedgehog, instead place an open palm on the floor in front of them and allow them to come to you.

The more time you spend with your hedgehog, the sooner they will become comfortable with you.



HANDLING & GROOMING

SAFE HANDLING

Picking Up Your Hedgehog

Waiting for your hedgehog to come to you before picking them up is a great way to develop trust. Talk to your hedgehog and let them sniff your hand before attempting to pick them up. Hedgehogs do not have strong eyesight so it's important to move slowly so you don't startle them. Always use two hands when picking up your hedgehog. One hand should support the rump while the other supports the chest. Hold them close to your body and talk softly to comfort them. It is helpful to wrap your hedgehog in a piece of fleece before picking them up to protect yourself from being poked.

GROOMING

Nails

Hedgehogs need regular nail trims, but it can be tricky to prevent them from balling up. To protect your hands, either wear gardening gloves or use fleece to lightly wrap your hedgehog. Place your hands on both sides of the animal with your fingers on its belly. If you cannot get them to unfurl, place the hedgehog in a small tub with about one inch of lukewarm water as this will prevent them from balling up. Holding the hedgehog still, cover the toe with your finger so only the nail is exposed, and use a human nail clipper to clip the clear part of the nail. If you accidentally clip the pink vein (or quick) dip your pet's foot in styptic powder to stop the bleeding. It can be helpful to have a second person holding the animal, to give them lots of treats, and to keep sessions short. Alternatively, view our events page on our website for our nail trim clinic dates and we can do it for you!

Dental Care

You do not need to brush your hedgehog's teeth, but they are prone to abscesses, loose teeth, biting their tongues, and tumors so you should monitor their ability to eat and bring them to the vet when necessary.

Bathing

Hedgehogs are messy animals. They use licking and shaking to keep themselves clean, but most still end up stepping in their feces and occasionally getting it on other parts of their bodies. When this happens, gently bathe them in a shallow tub with just a few inches of **warm** water and a small amount of kitten, small pet, or baby tear-free shampoo.

Brushing

Most hedgehogs should not need to be brushed, but a toothbrush can be used to remove debris from their quills.



HEALTH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Lifespan

Hedgehogs live an average of 3 to 5 years.

Reproduction

Hedgehogs can reproduce between 6 and 8 weeks old. Since hedgehogs should remain solitary, spaying or neutering is not necessary.

Routine At Home Health Checks

At least once a week, spend some time examining your hedgehog's quills, fur, skin, and teeth for any physical changes such as lumps, wounds, loose teeth, or overgrown nails, poor coat quality, etc. If any abnormalities are found, it is a good idea to make an appointment with your veterinarian for assessment, as any health concerns can progress very quickly.

Annual Exam

All hedgehogs should be given a yearly veterinary exam to ensure they stay in good health. Hedgehogs do not require any vaccines.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS

Like all pocket pets, hedgehogs are very good at hiding when they get sick so if you see any of the following signs get in contact with your veterinarian immediately:

ANY BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

CHANGES IN EATING

LETHARGY

CHANGES IN DRINKING

DEFENSIVE AGGRESSION

DISINTEREST IN TREATS

DISINTEREST IN INTERACTION

DRY SKIN

COLD TO THE TOUCH

LOSING QUILLS



HEALTH

COMMON ILLNESSES

Hibernation

Hedgehogs will hibernate if the temperature drops below 65° F. This can be fatal to your pet. To avoid this, keep a thermometer on or in your cage and make sure it maintains the correct temperature. Prepare to add a heat lamp or space heater, if necessary. If your hedgehog appears to be going into hibernation, warm them up slowly by placing them under a heat lamp, on a covered heating pad, or under your shirt close to your skin. You must get them to a vet as soon as possible to avoid any long-term or life-threatening issues such as dehydration. *Symptoms include not moving, feeling cold and limp, and shallow breathing.*

Respiratory Infections

Hedgehogs are sensitive creatures and can easily develop respiratory infections that can turn into pneumonia. To avoid this, keep your hedgehog's cage away from drafts, clean it often, use fleece bedding, provide as large a habitat as possible, and keep stress to a minimum. *Symptoms include sneezing, eye and nose discharge, lack of appetite, and lethargy.*

Skin Conditions

Hedgehogs are prone to a range of skin problems. The most common issues are mites, infections, or dry skin. Treatments depend on the cause and include medications, changing the bedding, food, or cleaning detergent types, or other husbandry changes. *Symptoms include excessive scratching, sores, losing quills, dry skin, or flaky ears.*

Obesity

If a hedgehog starts overeating or isn't exercising enough, they can become obese. Fat rolls can develop under their armpits and on their head making it difficult for them to curl into a ball. Long term, obesity can cause tumors, fatty liver disease, or heart attacks. Your vet may recommend changing food, reducing treats, or increasing the amount of exercise time to get them to a healthier weight. *Symptoms include fat rolls under their armpits and on their head, inability to curl into a ball, difficulty moving, and labored breathing.*



BEHAVIOR

All hedgehogs sound and act a little differently. Only by spending time with them will you fully be able to understand them. Below is a general guide of their communication to get you started.

VOCALIZATION

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Chirping	A soft squeaking sound.	<i>Used mostly to communicate with new babies.</i>
Grunting	A purring or whistling sound.	<i>Contentment.</i>
Hissing	A hiss or clicking noise.	<i>Defensive or aggressive noise meaning "I'm scared" or "Go away."</i>
Huffing	Puffing or sneezing sound often accompanied by erect spines and a furrowed brow.	<i>Irritated, annoyed, or uncertain.</i>
Snuffing	An almost wheezing sound.	<i>Conversing with their human or other animals.</i>
Screaming	Loud, high pitched noise.	<i>Pain, fear, or sometimes having a nightmare.</i>

BODY LANGUAGE

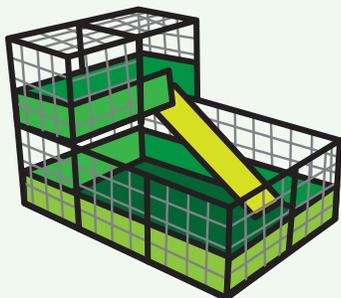
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Balling Up	May be accompanied by snuffles, huffs, or snorts.	<i>Angry or scared.</i>
Self-Anointing	If they find an interesting taste or smell they create foamy saliva and spread it over their quills.	<i>No one is completely sure of the purpose of this, but it may be used to provide camouflage, as a perfume, or possibly as an attempt to add toxins to quills.</i>
Scratching	Fluffing quills.	<i>May be done to fluff quills back up after sleeping, to indicate nervousness, due to quilling, dirty skin, or mites.</i>
Nipping	Biting.	<i>Fear, frustration, or confusion over a new scent.</i>
Burrowing	Making a nest under whatever they can find.	<i>Hedgehogs feel most comfortable somewhere dark, enclosed, and just big enough for them to turn around in.</i>



HEDGEHOG SUPPLY CHECKLIST

CAGE

4 square feet per hedgehog minimum.



SHELTER

Hedgehogs like to hide in shelters when they are nervous or relaxing. Wood or grass huts, cardboard boxes, etc.



WATER BOTTLE



FOOD DISH

Ceramic is best to prevent chewing.



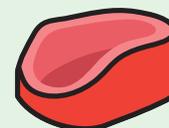
BEDDING

Fleece.



BED

A dog or cat bed, a small animal bed, or extra fleece.



FOOD

High-quality kibble cat food, high-quality hedgehog food, or a mix of both. Any food used must have over 20% protein and 5-15% fat. Be sure to look at the ingredients and do not purchase anything that has corn as one of the main ingredients.



THERMOMETER & HEAT SOURCE

Hedgehogs will hibernate if the temperature drops too low. Keep the habitat **between 72° and 80° F**.



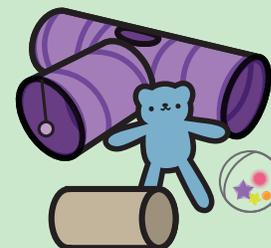
WHEEL

Solid base only. No wire, bars, or mesh.



ENRICHMENT

Be sure to provide your pet with lots of fun toys. Check out our homemade toys page for ideas.



PET CARRIER



LITTER BOX

Optional.



LITTER

For the litter box. MNPPR strongly recommends avoiding all wood-based beddings due to the general sensitivity of pocket pets. Only use unscented paper litter.



pelleted paper



shredded paper



soft recycled paper



DISCLAIMER AND CREDITS

DISCLAIMER

All information shared by MN Pocket Pet Rescue is researched, up to date, and accurate to the best of our ability. We are not a licensed veterinary organization and do not intend to present ourselves as such. All educational material contains our best recommendations for care specific to each species. However, all animals are different and some may have unique needs. MN Pocket Pet Rescue does not assume any liability for the well-being of any animal not under our care. Always use your best judgment and follow veterinary recommendations whenever necessary. If you have any questions or find inaccurate information please contact us.

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