

African Pygmy Hedgehog

Atelerix albiventris



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Hedgehogs are cute, inquisitive and active nocturnal creatures that can be wonderful pets. The hedgehog has barbless spines, also known as quills or spikes, that feel like a stiff bristled brush.



Is an African pygmy hedgehog the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have an appropriate location and space for a hedgehog.
- I know that male and female hedgehogs should not be kept together.
- I will provide daily, supervised time for this hedgehog outside of the habitat.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this hedgehog.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, an African pygmy hedgehog may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for an African pygmy hedgehog and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 4-9 inches in length **Life Span** 4 to 6 years with proper care

Diet Insectivores: mealworms, gut-loaded crickets; high-quality hedgehog food
Treats should not exceed 10% of total diet
Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily

Feeding Dry food and water should always be available
Treats of mealworms, crickets, fresh diced fruit, finely chopped hard-boiled eggs, bananas and apples may be offered 3-4 times weekly
Remove any uneaten food within 24 hours

Housing Hedgehogs acclimate well to average household temperatures: 68°F to 80°F; the habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area
A large aquarium is recommended but wire habitats can be used as long as there is a solid bottom to protect their feet; the space between the wires should be no larger than one inch; hedgehogs are excellent climbers, so ensure the habitat has a very secure lid.
Hedgehogs love to jump and play so an exercise wheel (solid or mesh) along with tubes, toys and balls are recommended; hedgehogs usually burrow during the day so it is important to provide a hiding place
2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings or pellets or recycled products; cedar bedding may cause harm and is not recommended; may be trained to use a litter box.

Different types of small animals should not be housed together.

Recommended Supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Cage	<input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiding place
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bedding	<input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/> Toys
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hedgehog food	<input type="checkbox"/> Crickets	<input type="checkbox"/> Large exercise wheel
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book on hedgehogs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mealworms	

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Normal Behavior and Interaction

Will roll into a spiny ball when frightened or first awakened; with patience and time, can learn to remain unrolled while being handled.

Communicates through a variety of sounds - a snuffling/snorting sound while rolled indicates fear or uncertainty

Hedgehogs have a remarkable behavior commonly referred to as "self-anointing"; occasionally, your hedgehog will salivate profusely and then it will spread the saliva over its back; this is a normal, though not well understood behavior.

Solitary; never house more than one hedgehog per habitat

Habitat Maintenance

Change bedding weekly or more often, as needed

Clean entire habitat and its contents with mild soap and water every week, rinsing well and allowing to dry completely before returning the hedgehog to its habitat

Grooming and Hygiene

Hedgehogs are relatively clean animals who rarely need baths; if a bath is necessary, wash with warm water and kitten shampoo, using a small soft brush to reach between spines; rinse well and towel dry carefully; do not allow the animal to chill

Because all hedgehogs are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your hedgehog and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.

Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a hedgehog and should consider not having a hedgehog as a pet. For more information regarding hedgehogs and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/companion animal care sheets>.

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active, alert, and sociable
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Clear eyes
- Clean spines
- Walks normally
- No bald patches

Common Health Issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause.
Mites and Fleas	External parasites that cause itching, loss of spines.	Contact an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.
Obesity	Double chin or fat rolls behind front legs caused by improper diet, too many treats, and insufficient exercise.	Increase exercise, reduce treats and consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to improve diet.

Red Flags

- Missing spines
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Uneven gait
- Labored breathing
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Weight loss
- Lethargic
- Double chin

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources

Guide to Owning an African Pygmy Hedgehog by Dennis Kelsey-Wood
Hedgehogs by Matthew M. Vreads
The Hedgehog by Dawn Wrobel and Susan A. Brown, DVM

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.