

Hedgehog Care Guide

Prepared by Dr. Lucy Haile on behalf of Wellesley Animal Hospital

HOUSING

Cage:

- Provide the largest cage possible to allow your hedgehog ample space to move around
- Hedgehogs are nocturnal so ensure their cage is not in a high daytime “traffic” area to allow them to sleep during the day
- Provide a hiding area for your hedgehog such as a cardboard box or a commercially available pet igloo
- Bedding/litter:
 - Always use unscented bedding and avoid cedar and pine shavings – strongly smelling bedding can cause irritation to the nose and lungs and contribute to respiratory disease
 - CareFresh or recycled newspaper beddings (eg Yesterday’s News) are recommended as they are good absorbable unscented materials
 - Fleece can also be used as bedding
 - Some hedgehogs can be litter box trained. Avoid cat or clumping litter and use Carefresh or Yesterday’s News in the litter box
 - Ensure to clean the bedding regularly – spot clean the bedding/litter daily and change all the bedding 1-2 times a week



NUTRITION

- Always have fresh water available
- Commercial hedgehog diets such as Mazuri hedgehog diet should make up the majority of the diet
- A small amount of fresh fruits and vegetables can be added to the diet daily
- Treats should make up less than 10% of the daily diet. These can consist of insects such as mealworms, a small amount of boiled egg or 1-2 tsp of high quality wet cat food
- Hedgehogs are prone to obesity so be sure to not overfeed. We recommend not leaving food out at all times to your hedgehog and what is placed down at night should be largely consumed by dawn
- We recommend weighing your hedgehog frequently to monitor their weight closely

BEHAVIOR

- Socialize your hedgehog while young to ensure they are used to being handled and will uncurl for you
- Allowing your hedgehog to have supervised playtime in a secure area can provide socialization and help exercise your hedgehog
- Provide a solid floor exercise wheel for both enrichment and to help prevent obesity
- Paper towel rolls, hay tunnels and cardboard boxes can all provide entertainment for your hedgehog

HEALTH CARE

- Hedgehogs by nature hide symptoms and signs of illnesses making early detection of disease difficult
- New patient exams and yearly examinations are therefore strongly recommended to help your hedgehog live a long and happy life. Depending on your hedgehog’s nature anesthesia/sedation may be required for a thorough physical exam
- If you notice any changes to your hedgehog’s behavior, appetite or bowel movements we would recommend contacting your veterinarian immediately