



Bringing your new baby home

When you collected your hoglet I gave you a supply of your hoglets regular food and bedding. This is to minimise the stress on your new baby. Add the bedding material to your cage, fill up the food and water bowls then try and leave them alone to adjust to the new smells in your home. Your hedgehog may make some very funny noises and roll into a tight ball. Don't worry this is normal, he/she is just being grumpy.

After a few days start handling your hoglet. It is best to do this in the early evening and in a quiet environment. Keep your handling time short at first, increasing slowly as they become more accustomed to you. Sit them on the palm of your hand and softly stroke the quills on their sides with your thumb and forefinger. They may continue to be grumpy but be patient, they will soon calm down and become very friendly.

General care

Diet:

I feed my hedgehogs on dried, meat based (not fish) cat food which is high in protein. Some good brands are Whiskas, Iams and GoCat. This allows my hedgehogs to exercise their teeth and helps prevent dental problems.

I also give wet cat food, cottage cheese, scrambled eggs and chicken. Hedgehogs can also eat fruit and vegetables e.g. apples and tomatoes. Some of mine do, some don't. Try adding it to the foods above, this may encourage them to eat it. I also buy the dried cat food with added vegetables.

As a treat I also feed my hedgehogs live mealworms and crickets. These are high in fat so should only be offered as a treat. You can buy these from any reptile pet shop. You can get dried mealworms but mine prefer to eat live ones.

Your hedgehog also needs a constant supply of fresh water (they get very thirsty eating dry food). Mine drink from plastic bowls but I have heard of some breeders using water bottles.

Your hedgehog's home:

Most people use an indoor rabbit cage such as the Zoo Zone 2 or Nero. I keep mine in wooden vivariums with extra vents. Which ever one you choose, they should not have wire mesh as hedgehog will attempt to climb the mesh and may hurt themselves.

Hedgehogs should be housed alone as they are solitary animals in the wild and only come together to breed. I have heard of females being kept together but never males, they would fight.



Your hedgehog bedroom and bedding:

I use wood shaving (dust extracted). This allows my hedgehogs to root for food. Some people use fleece blankets to cover the base of the cage but never use straw bedding as it can be sharp and cause injury to your hedgehog's nose or eyes.

You also need to provide a place for your hedgehog to sleep. I use a plastic igloo and fleece pouches for all my hedgehogs but you could also use wooden huts or boxes. I also give all my hedgehogs soft small animal bedding for them to make nests with.

Temperature:

African pygmy hedgehogs are best kept at a temperature of between 70 – 75 degrees (the temperature of a comfortably heated house). If the temperature drops below this they will attempt to hibernate, which could be fatal for your hedgehog.

Cleaning out:

I spot clean my hedgehogs every day, removing any heavily soiled bedding and clean the exercise wheel (they get very messy). I completely clean the cage once a week, this includes a complete bedding change, wiping over the cage with odourless, animal-safe disinfectant (strong smells will unsettle your hedgehog) and wash all food and water bowls.

Now we have covered all the practical things about keeping a hedgehog, it's time to move on to the fun things.

Play Time:

Your Hedgehog usually gets up around 8:30pm and could quite happily sit in your arms, crawl around you or the floor.

Toys:

As well as handling your hedgehog, you will also need to provide toys to stimulate them when you are not around. All my hedgehogs have exercise wheels (plastic not metal) as hedgehogs can walk up to 8 miles a night, kitchen roll tubes (cut down one side) and small cat balls.

Contacts and links:

I am always available for help and advice on:

mel@care4petsstockport.co.uk or sacha@iwilldesign.it

A very good forum for help and advice on:

www.pygmyhogsuk.forumandco.com