

**ANIMAL TALK**  
**6514 ROOSEVELT WAY N.E.**  
**SEATTLE WASHINGTON 98115**  
**(206) 526~1558**  
**ANMTLK@AOL.COM**  
**WWW.ANIMAL~TALK.COM**  
**FACEBOOK.COM/ANIMALTALKPETSHOP**

## **AFRICAN PYGMY HEDGEHOG**

*Erinaceus albiventris*

### **Necessities:**

- 20 gal long tank or larger
- Bedding
- Water bottle
- food dish
- Hedgehog food
- Meal worms
- Hiding place for sleeping
- Under tank heater
- Wheel

### **Extras:**

- Toys
- Extra cage furniture
- Treats



### **General:**

Hedgehogs are a very unique pet. Although very prickly for young children, with proper care, patience and regular handling are fun for all ages. The breeding and selling of hedgehogs is closely regulated by the USDA. Make sure when purchasing one of these little cuties that you are dealing with a USDA licensed business or person. We get our hedgies from Hedgehog Valley. They come with their pedigrees and birthdates. We love her hedgies. They are handled as pups and their genetic background is known.

In the wild they live a single life, always foraging for insects under rocks and in the dirt. About the only time 2 hedgehogs come together is for reproducing and that is only for a few minutes. Hedgehogs kept together will nip at eachothers toes and back of legs. We have actually taken some in as rescue who were kept together and were missing feet and toes because of this. They live approximately 6-10 years. Gestation is 30-40 days with an average litter size of 4. When born, the quills are actually very soft and harden up after only a few days. Hedgehogs like dry warm environments (80-90 degrees) and are mainly insectivores but also will enjoy some fruits and vegetables occasionally.

### **Handling:**

When you come by to meet a hedgehog, we will show you how to pick it up. If someone is afraid of picking up a hedgehog, we will encourage them to try a different pet. When picking up and handling your hedgehog ,we recommend scooping them up from underneath with some of their shavings with both hands, this way you don't get prickled as much. Once you have your pet up in your hands slowly, work the bedding out, much like separating a yolk of an egg. Once your hedgehog can feel the skin of your hands on its underside (if you use gloves they will NOT relax and if you use leather gloves they will bite them), they start to relax and lay their quills down. It is a natural reflex when anything startles them or approaches them from above to huff up their quills and to click in order to protect themselves. This is as natural to them as it is for us to blink when something flies into our face. If they get really excited about a smell, they will start to lick and foam at the mouth. In most animals, licking is a sign of affection but not in hedgehogs. It means something smells like food and will be followed by a nip. Other than that they generally will not bite unless extremely agitated. Don't be startled if your hedgehog starts foaming at the mouth and licking itself ferociously, this is called "self-anointing" and is how they clean themselves.

### **Exercise:**

Exercise is very important. Hedgehogs don't usually play with toys but they will use large solid wheels, tunnels, hiding places and anything else that is safe and offers a sleeping place. If you want to build a safe playground for your hedgehog, try a children's' wading pool with a thin layer of dirt or bedding on the bottom and a few live crickets or mealworms. They'll love hunting for their treats and you won't have to worry about them getting stuck under or in something or pottyng on the floor.

### **Housing, Heating & Bedding:**

We recommend using **at least** a 20L (12x30) glass aquarium with a reptile heating pad attached on the underside or on one end or a ceramic heat bulb placed on top of a screen lid (always use a metal screen lid for this), during the winter time in Western Washington. During the hot humid weather in our area, we recommend turning off the heat to the cage. Remember hedgies like it hot and dry, not hot and humid. We **DO NOT** recommend using large plastic containers as a cage. When you heat these, they release chemicals that can be toxic to animals and are a fire hazard. Breeders will use this type of housing because they don't want the hedgies to see each other and they have the room heated. Aspen® or Carefresh® litter work well as a bedding (NEVER CEDAR or PINE). We also sprinkle about a tablespoon of 20 Mule Team Borax® in the bedding to help prevent mites. The tank should have a locking screen top to prevent other pets from harassing your hedgie and to make sure he/she does not climb out. The cage should be totally cleaned out at least once a week. A 10% solution of bleach and water should be used for cleaning the tank, food dish and water dish (detergents leave residues that can be harmful). Hedgehogs generally choose one corner or spot to go potty in, this area should be scooped out daily or litter box train your pet by placing a small pie plate with kitty litter in its chosen spot. The bedding should be kept clean and dry at all times.

### **Diet:**

Fresh clean water should be available at all times and changed everyday. They will use a 8 oz. hamster water bottle or a heavy shallow dish for water. The food dish should also be heavy as hedgehogs like to try to burrow under things and will dump their dishes over. We carry, use and recommend Hedgehog Select Diet. Babies should always have as much food as they want. Adults' food can be controlled a bit to prevent obesity. Obesity can cause liver problems. Do remember that hedgies have very fast metabolisms. They can lose weight very quickly so you must watch closely. Changing your hedgehogs' diet should be done slowly after it has settled in with you. Sudden changes in diet can lead to runny stools or refusing to eat. They will also eat a small amount of veggies (a teaspoon is more than enough). Be careful not to over do too quickly or you may constipate your hedgie. Although we have a prepared food for them, they are insectivores by nature and should get two or three live or freeze dried mealworms or crickets each day.

### **Lighting:**

Hedgies are nocturnal and do not require extra lighting. It is important to have some day to night cycle of light to promote good appetite and sleep cycles. Usually the normal lighting in a home is enough. **DO NOT** set your cage in front of a window. It is drafty and when the sun comes through the window and the cage glass it can burn your hedgie.

### **Health and well being:**

The two most common health concerns for hedgies are obesity and being dropped. Both are easy to prevent with good exercise and careful handling. Another concern is what is a genetic disorder called Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome. This is why the genetic backgrounds should be maintained. The symptoms of WHS are just that, the hedgie becomes wobbly. Unfortunately this is the same symptom of many things that can be wrong with a hedgie, such as liver disorders, low blood sugar, pneumonia, and almost every other health problem. There is no treatment for WHS and the hedgie does not get better. The **ONLY** way to identify WHS is an necropsy done by a veterinarian. This is why we are very picky about where we get our hedgies. If you have a question about your hedgies health, please feel free to call us. Remember that once an animal starts exhibiting signs of illness you must act quickly. Find out who the vet is in your area that **KNOWS** hedgehogs. We use Dr. Karen Obegi 206-365-1102.

**Enjoy your new pet.  
If you have any questions, give us a call!**