

Care and Husbandry of the African Pygmy Hedgehog

Avian and Exotic Animal Care, PA

Raleigh, NC

(919)844-9166

Biologic Facts and Behavior

- *Atherlerix albiventris*
- An insectivore related to moles and shrews
- Have a very strong sense of smell which they use to identify their surroundings, will “self anoint” if exposed to strong or unusual smell, foaming at the mouth then spreading the foam on their bodies
- Nocturnal habits – more active at night than during the day.
- Need to be handled and well-socialized when young to make well-adjusted pets. Some adult hedgehogs may not like to be handled regardless of socialization when young.
- Average life span 3-5 years, can live up to 10 years

Housing

- Will range up to 1 mile in the wild, so need adequate space to roam and explore (20 gallon or larger aquarium)
- Enclosures with wire mesh bottoms not recommended as these can cause foot and leg injuries.
- Enjoy privacy and require a box or other suitable hiding spot
- Aspen shavings or recycled newspaper bedding recommended (NOT pine or cedar, not cat litter)
- Sipper bottle with fresh water should be available at all times
- Average temperature should be kept around 70-85 degrees
- Will use exercise wheels (solid plastic, not open wire wheels)

Diet

- Commercial hedgehog diet (light or reduced calorie, high-quality adult cat food may be used if hedgehog food is unavailable) about 3 teaspoons/day
- 1 teaspoon daily of chopped mixed vegetables and/or fruits (beans, carrots, apples, pears, berries, squash, peas, potatoes, tomatoes)
- Offer live insects such as gut-loaded crickets, mealworms, earthworms, 3-4 times a week (avoid waxworms because they are high in fat)
- Diet is extremely important because obesity is one of the most common medical problems seen in pet hedgehogs!

Medical Care and Common Problems

- Annual physical exam and fecal analysis recommended
- Skin disease is common: mites, fungal disease, fleas
- Dental disease and gum disease are common, and can largely be prevented by feeding an appropriate diet, routine brushing and scaling may be needed
- All owners should be aware that hedgehogs can be carriers of Salmonella
- Other problems include respiratory problems, nutritional problems, and tumors
- A veterinarian should see your hedgehog immediately if it is lethargic, anorexic, has difficulty moving, or any unusual lumps or masses are seen.