

Caring for your pygmy hedgehog

**How to keep pet pygmy
hedgehogs healthy and happy**



Notcutts

GARDEN INSPIRATION SINCE 1897

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Are pygmy hedgehogs right for me?

Pygmy hedgehogs make lovely little pets that are easy to look after and provide hours of fun for the family. These pets are easily scared and may not be suitable for young children. Adult supervision is always required when children are handling a pygmy hedgehog.

Even though they are nocturnal, pygmy hedgehogs need 12 hours of light a day. They rely mostly on their sense of smell, their second most important sense is their hearing.

The more you handle pygmy hedgehogs, the friendlier they become. When they are relaxed, their spines lay almost flat but when they feel threatened, they will roll into a tight ball with their spines sticking up. This can make them tricky to handle until they are used to you.

Pygmy hedgehogs are solitary little creatures and should be kept alone. If looked after properly, they can live up to 6 years.

Choosing a new pet pygmy hedgehog

When selecting your hedgehog, check these signs that he is healthy:

- Bright, clear eyes
- Moist, clean nose
- Clean ears

- Healthy skin with no blemishes or sign of mites
- Healthy weight and appetite
- Regular breathing
- Moves without restriction

The first few days

It is important that your hedgehog suffers minimal stress when being introduced to their new home. Their cage should already be set up with bedding, hiding places, water and food, ready for their arrival.

When you first bring your new hedgehog home, he will be quite stressed by the transition so gently place him in his cage and then leave him alone for a few days.

Your hedgehog needs this time to get used to his new environment. You can help him acclimatise by spending time near his cage so he can get used to your scent, sound and habits. With time he will understand that you are not a treat.

Only attempt to handle him when you are confident he is comfortable with your presence.

Creating a happy home

Pygmy hedgehogs are very active and need their house to be at least 90cm x 45cm. They love to run around so a proper exercise space and a wheel should be available.

Hedgehogs need a constant temperature of around 23°C. If they are too cold, your hedgehog may go into hibernation and be at

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risk of death or if they are too hot, this can impact his health.

If you are keeping your hedgehog in a cage, this will need a heating mat too. Hedgehogs require 12 hours of light a day and their cage must be kept away from draughts. They also need a sleeping box for rest and privacy.

A healthy diet and treats

Pygmy hedgehogs eat a good high protein cat biscuit daily which could be mixed with a few dried mealworms.

Treat them now and then with live mealworms, locusts and wax worms.

Never feed your hedgehog avocado, citrus fruits, nuts or fish (or foods made of fish) or wild hedgehog food as these are extremely harmful.

They can take water from a rabbit drinking bottle.



Getting to know you

You can tame your hedgehog by handling him gently and frequently.

To pick him up, gently scoop him up around the sides. Initially your hedgehog may curl into a ball when you try to pick him up but if you cradle him in your hands within a few minutes he will unroll and start exploring once he realises you mean him no harm.

Exercise your pygmy hedgehog needs

In the wild, hedgehogs cover great distances every day. They need plenty of exercise which can be offered with a running wheel. Choose an open sided, solid surface wheel big enough to comfortably house your hedgehog.

He will also need time outside of his cage to explore and run around.

Pygmy hedgehogs and other pets

Pygmy hedgehogs are solitary animals. We advise against keeping adult hedgehogs together.

Pygmy hedgehog gender

Please ask a member of our team to confirm the sex of your hedgehog before buying.



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Hedgehog sounds

You can understand how your hedgehog might be feeling from the noises he makes:

- Soft purring and whistling - pure contentment
- Puffing - uncertainty
- Snorting or sneezing - usually accompanies puffing and means the same thing
- Hissing and clicking - warning sounds or irritation and fear
- Snuffling - happily checking things out
- Chirping - usually done by males while breeding and by nursing babies
- Screaming - physical pain or fear
- Snoring, huffing, chirping - sounds heard during sleep

Potential health issues with pygmy hedgehogs

Mites

You may see frequent scratching or dry, flaky skin. Seek veterinary advice and wash and disinfect the cage and contents as well as the surrounding area.

Lethargy, wobbliness, cold to touch

Immediately warm your hedgehog up by cuddling using body temperature or run warm water along their back. If the problem persists, seek veterinary advice.

Self-anointing

When your hedgehog smells or tastes something new or tasty it will produce large quantities of frothy saliva. Then the hedgehog spreads the foam over its own spikes, don't be alarmed, this is normal behaviour.

Pet insurance for your pygmy hedgehog

Pygmy hedgehogs can be insured under plans for small mammals, however, it may not be possible to find an insurance plan specifically tailored to pygmy hedgehogs.

Your new pet checklist

- Cage
- Cage disinfectant
- Wood flakes
- Wheel
- Food bowl
- Toys
- Water bottle
- Heat mat
- Food
- Lighting
- Sleeping box with a roof
- Thermometer

Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



Share your experiences of your new pet with us on social media.



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