

Hedgehog

African dwarf hedgehog, white bellied

Atelerix sp.

Adult Size	1 pound, 6 inches	Life Span	8 – 10 years
Male/Female Differences	A penis sheath is present and testes can be obvious in males. In young hedgehogs, sexing is done by eyeing the distance between the urethra and the anus; the distance is further apart in males.		
Compatibility	Hedgehogs are solitary animals. Males will fight by lowering the spines over their eyes as a sort of visor and charge each other. House all hedgehogs, males and females, separately.		
Origin	Northern Africa		
Climate	Average house temperatures are fine. Avoid extremes; high heat can cause strokes and low temperatures can lead to hibernation, a state the animal is not prepared for that can be fatal.		
Day Cycle	Normally nocturnal, can switch to days.		
Temperature	60 – 75 Degrees is ideal.		
Lighting	Normally lighting is not an issue, as these animals are nocturnal. If switched to a diurnal cycle, avoid intense lighting, as hedgehogs have sensitive eyes.		
Humidity	Being from such a dry climate, hedgehogs prefer lower humidity but can tolerate most indoor conditions.		
Habitat/Territory	Native to arid scrub- and grassland in northern Africa, these animals are also burrowers. They will root and dig around their cages in the substrate.		
Substrate/Bedding	Low dust litters, such as recycled paper products and pelleted litter, can be used. Avoid shaved aspen, sand, or		

	small grained litter as this can get under the spines and cause irritation. Corn cob should not be used as it can harbor mold spores.
Hiding Place/Den	Wooden house make great, safe, and secure sleeping places – mimicking their natural burrows.
Cage Type	Cages with easily cleaned plastic bottoms and airy wire tops make great homes. The larger the better – There should be room for the larger plastic exercise wheels. Hedgehogs love to climb (despite their squat, bulky shape), so ramps or ladders allow for more exercise and fun. Cat toys can be used for toys.
Diet	Naturally insectivorous in the wild, most of their nutritional needs can be met with pelleted foods made specifically for hedgehogs . Live insects such as wax worms, super worms, and crickets offer fresh nutrition (especially gut loaded insects.)
Supplements	Extra protein in the form of soft scrambled eggs, canned dog or cat food, or freeze dried treats can be offered. Dark leafy greens, vegetables, and soft fruits, offered sparingly, can add variety to their diet, as can small amounts of cooked meat. Prepackaged pasta mixes and vegetable mixes can be served dry or warm. Enzymes help hedgehogs get more nutrition out of their foods.
Diet Precautions	Obesity can occur from over feeding and lack of exercise. Even though hedgehogs love milk and cheese, these should never be fed as these animals are lactose intolerant. Meal worms can cause obesity.
Feeding	Hedgehogs are awake when their food is awake. In the wild, this is at night. By removing food at night and replacing it during the day at home switches their schedule to match yours. Food should be served room temperature or warmed; cold food from the refrigerator can cause digestive upset.
Water Source	Water bottles stay cleaner than water dishes, as hedgehogs can kick substrate into it.
Grooming	Hedgehogs groom themselves. The need a bath once or twice a year, using mild baby shampoo.
Oral and Foot Care	Long nails need to be trimmed, a tricky task that should be done by someone with experience (your vet or Wilmette

Pet). Hedgehogs have no real oral problems.

Proper Handling

Startled or scared hedgehogs are so defensive that handling them is uncomfortable. They can be then scooped up with a flat spatula or towel. Calm, relaxed hedgehogs are active and very handleable and seem to enjoy climbing over and around your hand. When startled they can roll up and raise their spines, making it likely they will be dropped, so keep them close to the ground. Do not use gloves, as this prevents the hedgehog from becoming accustomed to your scent.

Habitat Maintenance

Being desert animals hedgehogs are fairly clean. Spot clean daily and replace substrate weekly. Hedgehogs can be trained to the litter pan in their cage; place soiled bedding for scent.

Health Concerns

Check new hedgehogs for signs of fleas or mites. Hedgehogs are pretty hardy animals. Respiratory problems can result from lack of ventilation and unclean homes. A condition hedgehog breeders must watch out for is called Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome (WHS), a neurological condition similar to MS in humans. Hedgehogs can occasionally suffer from congenital cancers.
