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## **AFRICAN PIGMY HEDGEHOG HUSBANDRY**

### **HOUSING**

A plastic bottom cage with narrow wire walls or 30 gallon aquarium may be used with a minimum dimension of 2 feet by 3.5 feet. A hiding place made of PVC pipe or a wooden or cardboard box should be provided. Recycled newspaper bedding is the substrate of choice. A litter box can be offered but sand or clumping litters are not recommended because they can cause problems with the skin, urinary tract and respiratory tract. Supplemental heat will probably be necessary for your hedgehog because they require a temperature range from 75 to 85 F. Low humidity is also an important in keeping hedge hogs healthy. Because they are extremely active having supervised exercise is advised as well as having a solid wheel in the cage. Wheels with slates can cause foot damage/fractured legs.

### **DIET**

The majority of the diet should consist of a commercially prepared hedgehog food or high protein (30-50%) moderate fat (10-20%) canned or dry dog/cat food. Treats can be varied including meat mixtures, hard-boiled or scrambled eggs, pinky mice and vegetable or meat baby foods. Dairy products should be avoided because lactose intolerance has been reported. If insects are offered they should be commercially produced, gut loaded (see cricket care guide) and dusted with a calcium supplement and be less than 5-10% of the diet. Water should be available at all times and changed daily. Most hedgehogs will learn to drink from sipper bottles. Scientific studies regarding exact nutritional requirements of hedge hogs so offering a variety of foods will help minimize deficiencies.

### **VETERINARY CARE**

Yearly examinations are recommended because hedgehogs will hide their signs of illness. Often, they will need sedation/anesthesia to complete a thorough examination of the mouth or if they are nervous and ball up. Cancer of the mouth and other organs are quite common in hedge hogs and with early veterinary intervention the outcome greatly improves. Other common problems that can be prevented in hedge hogs are external parasites, obesity and dental disease. If you would like to schedule an appointment please contact our office at 240-687-1414.

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