***Prickly Potato Hedgehogs Care Sheet***

***HOUSING***

I recommend a plastic tote. I use the 105-110 qt from Wal-Mart and Home Depot, but larger is also great. Plastic totes may not be the most appealing cage to look at but they are inexpensive, have a solid bottom, are easy to clean and sanitize, and the safest cage option.

If you are going to use the lid on the plastic tote, you will need to alter the lid to provide proper ventilation. Cutting out the middle section of the lid and zip-tying a piece of hardware cloth works perfectly.

There are many other cage options, they just need a little altering to make them the perfect home for your baby. Make sure all ramps and platforms are removed and 10” of coroplast is covering all exposed bars to prevent climbing.

***BEDDING***

* Kiln dried pine pellets (Litter box or mixed with other bedding, it's not pleasant to walk on)
* Pine shavings (Some farm stores sell sawdust which is much too dusty. Look for low dust shavings like TSC bales)
* Aspen
* Carefresh/Paper bedding
* Fleece

Cedar shavings are TOXIC! DO NOT USE CEDAR.

***HEATING***

Hedgehogs MUST have a constant heat source. Without a heat source hedgehogs will attempt to hibernate, which can be fatal if left untreated.

They must be kept at an ambient temperature of 75-80 degrees.

THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR HOME IS NOT A HEAT SOURCE! No babies will go to their new homes without a proper heat source.

Heat pads ARE NOT SAFE! Heat pads will not raise the ambient temperature enough and could cause severe burns to your hedgie.

There are only two safe ways to heat a hedgehog.

* Ceramic Heat Emitter (CHE) (100-150 watts)

A CHE is a bulb that screws into a dome lamp. It does not produce light. Regular heat bulbs produce light and will disrupt the hedgehogs natural sleep cycle.

When using A CHE, you will also need a ceramic dome (plastic dome lamps are not rated for a CHE), probe thermometer and a thermostat to control the temperature.

* ​The other heating option is to heat an entire small room to the appropriate temperature using an electric heater.

When using an electric heater, you will need digital thermometers to make sure that both the room and cage are staying at the correct temperature.

***WHEELS***

You will need a wheel! Hedgehogs run ALL night! Without a wheel they will get very bored, destructive and overweight.

Silent Spinners are NOT acceptable. They are known to cause injuries! The Silent Spinner has a crack down the middle of the wheel and has been known to pinch off toes. Wire mesh and Bared wheels should also be avoided. The wheel should be appropriate sized and have a solid running space.

Saucer Wheels are made for smaller animals, and often break.

Recommended wheels:

* the 12” Kaytee comfort wheel (Amazon)
* Henrys Haven bucket wheel (Etsy)
* Sonoran Desert bucket wheel (Etsy)
* Carolina Storm bucket wheel (Etsy)

***INSIDE THE CAGE***

You will need a place for your hedgie to hide and feel safe. Large plastic igloos make great hides. You can purchase fleece snuggle sacks, tunnels and igloo covers for your hedgie on Etsy.

​You'll need dishes for food and water. I use living world dishes for food (found on Amazon).

Hedgehogs love to tip over their water dish! We love the chicken nipple bottles for our hedgehogs, they never leak! Chicken nipple bottles can be purchased on Etsy from Quill Valley Hedgehogs or Sonoran Desert Hedgies.

​TOYS and clutter! Hedgehogs love toys and clutter! PVC Tunnels (4" minimum), fleece forests, foraging mats, stuffed cat toys (catnip is fine), crinkle balls, crinkle disks, rubber duckies, pom poms, solid plastic balls, tea bag covers with mint tea, etc.

AVOID plastic cat toys with holes and slits, hedgehogs can get their jaw stuck in between the slits.

***DIET***

What you decide to feed to your hedgehog is very important. Choosing the correct diet will help your hedgehog live a long healthy life.

Foods marketed for hedgehogs are extremely poor quality. The ONLY hedgehog food I recommend is Hedgehog Precision. Hedgehog Precision is an insect based kibble that was designed just for hedgehogs. It is not available in stores but can be purchased from their website.

Another insect based food option is a cat food called Catit Nuna.

I would recommend feeding either the insect based foods above or a quality dry cat kibble, or a mix of the two! Cat kibble is easily found in stores. I recommend mixing at least two quality kibbles together. There are some things to keep in mind when choosing your hedgehogs food:

* Check the ingredients! Meat or bugs should always be the first ingredient. You want foods with more animal proteins and less plant proteins.
* I try to find foods without multiple pea fillers such as (peas, pea protein, pea fiber, chickpeas, and other legumes).
* Grains. I find that some grains are beneficial to a hedgehogs diet because they provide more fiber. Grain-free foods have been linked to cardiomyopathy in dogs. To stay on the safe side, if using a grain free food, we recommend mixing it with a bag of food that does contain the grains.
* Choose foods with an absolute maximum of 15% fat. Too much fat in their diet will lead to obesity.
* Kibble size! Some cat foods have very large kibbles that may be hard for a hedgehog to eat. Small kibbles and X shaped kibbles seem to be easiest for them to chew.

Remember that your hedgehog will only eat about 1 TBS per day, so the foods you choose will last much longer than feeding a cat or dog.

In addition to the Hedgehog Precision and/or cat kibble, hedgehogs need to be supplied with live bugs (freezing the bugs is fine if you don't like creepy crawlies).

Hedgehogs DO NOT need vegetables and fruits added to their diets.

***Bugs***

* Mealworms
* Cricket powder
* Black soldier fly larva/Phoenix worms/Calci-worms
* Super worms
* Crickets
* Dubia roaches
* Wax worms
* Silk worms
* Hornworms
* Butter worms

***Whole Prey Items***

* Pinky mice
* Day old quail
* Reptilinks (Chicken, Chicken & Rabbit, Quail, Insect & Rabbit)
* ​Organ meats (Chicken gizzards and hearts)

***Food to Avoid***

* Raw meats (salmonella, E coli)
* Dairy (Lactose Intolerant)
* Dried fruits (choking hazard)
* Nuts (choking hazard)
* Candy (unhealthy, choking hazard, toxic)
* Acidic fruits (causes diarrhea)
* Avocado (toxic)
* Grapes and Raisins (toxic)
* Onions and Garlic (toxic)
* Seeds (choking hazard)
* Deli or Canned meats (Like Tuna and Chicken, high sodium)

***BATHING***

Bathing your hedgehog should only be done when needed. Too many baths can lead to dry skin.

Bathe in a shallow bath of warm water. If needed you can bathe with an unscented, gentle, baby soap. A good one is Aveeno Oatmeal baby soap.

You can use a small soft toothbrush to lightly brush the quills and nails.

Foot baths can be done when a full bath isn't needed. Fill the bath with enough water to just cover the feet and lightly brush their feet with a soft toothbrush.

Nails will need to be clipped! I use small cat clippers from the dollar store or Cuticle clippers. To cut the nails, place your hedgehog on a table or counter and pull out the legs from underneath and trim the nails.

Some hedgehogs refuse to cooperate. For the uncooperative hedgies, you can trim their nails while they are in the bath. They can't ball up in the bath, so it will be easier to trim the nails. I use cuticle clippers to trim nails, small cat clippers are also a good option.

There have been multiple cases of fungal infections from coconut oil applied topically.

For dry skin, I recommend adding a little flax seed oil or salmon oil to their food. A small amount of bag balm applied to the ears can help with dryness and tatters.

***BONDING***

Huffing puffing and popping when you bring your hedgehog home is completely normal. You may even hear some grunts and clicks! The hedgehogs natural defense is to intimidate predators with their popping and grunting and rolling into a ball. It's what hedgehogs do!

Don't be intimidated by your hedgehog. Be confident when handling your new hedgehog. If the huffs and puffs are causing you to not handle your hedgehog, the hedgehog will continue to act this way.

Handle your hedgehog often. Scoop the hedgehog up from underneath their belly without hesitation. Move him or her from hand to hand to get it used to being handled. Hold them face down in your hands. Handling them on their back will likely slow the bonding process because they feel most vulnerable on their backs.

Put your hedgehog in a bonding pouch and place it on your lap when you watch TV, its a great way for your hedgehog to get used to your smells and voice.

For more detailed information, please visit our website

WWW.PRICKLYPOTATOHEDGEHOGS.COM