

Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic

9330 Waldemar Road Indianapolis, IN 46268
www.exoticvetclinic.com (317) 879-8633



Care of Hedgehogs

Introduction:

Hedgehogs are an interesting pet. Hedgehogs are nocturnal animals and are mostly active in the evenings. They tend to roll up into balls when frightened and may jump and hiss trying to frighten the “attacker”. Hedgehogs exhibit “anointing” behaviors in which they will hypersalivate and lick their spines, covering themselves with saliva. This behavior is thought to be initiated by unfamiliar scents. Hedgehogs have been known to live up to 8-10 years.

Captivity Requirements:

An enclosure with smooth walls and floor that are not able to be climbed is the best for these animals. Wire floored cages are not recommended. Bedding should be soft and absorbent. A nest box or hiding place should be available at all times. Most hedgehogs will use a litter box if one is placed in the cage; use pelleted, low dust litter (not clay or clumping litter). The temperature should be between 75°-85° F; temperatures less than 60°-65°F may cause a hibernation-like condition, which is a very dangerous condition and should be avoided. No more than one male should be present in one cage since they tend to behave very aggressively towards each other. They can be given toys such as PVC pipes for hiding and some will also run on wheels.

Diet:

The exact natural diet of hedgehogs is unknown, but they appear to be mostly insectivorous. We recommend a commercial zoo insectivore diet, supplemented with occasional insects, fruits, and vegetables. The fruit/vegetable mix should include a variety of the following: leafy dark greens (spinach, kale, and leaf lettuce), diced carrot, apple, banana, grapes or raisins. Water should be provided in a bottle or crock at all times.

Diseases:

Cancer is the most common disease in hedgehogs. It comes in many forms and can attack any body organ. Other diseases include infections and skin mites. If any symptoms of illness (such as decreased appetite, lethargy or abnormal behavior) are observed, your hedgehog should be examined by an experienced veterinarian.