

## CARE OF HEDGEHOGS

**HOUSING:** Single level cage designed specifically for hedgehogs or small rodents. Wire cage bottoms are not recommended as they can cause foot injuries. The larger the cage, the better. They will climb on cage furniture and use exercise wheels. African pygmy hedgehogs require a year-round environmental temperature of at least 75 degrees. Colder temperatures will result in illness. Undercage heating pads marketed for reptiles are great for hedgies.

**SUBSTRATE:** Cedar and pine shavings have been found to cause liver damage and irritation to the respiratory tract of small mammals. A thick layer of bedding should be provided for burrowing. Soft material may be provided for bedding, but must be monitored to make sure the hedgehog does not ingest fibers. They usually will not play with toys, but can get a lot of exercise digging and foraging for food items hidden around the cage.

**FEEDING:** Hedgehogs are omnivorous insectivores and require a varied diet. Omnivore chow or reduced calorie cat food-either dry or a mix of dry and canned-should be the base. Hard bodied insects, mixed vegetables and greens, small amounts of fruits and other sources of protein may be offered. Good quality cat treats are acceptable, cereals and dried fruits should be used only sparingly if at all.

**VETERINARY CARE:** We recommend a wellness exam at the time of purchase/adoption, then exams every six months. Bloodwork should be done sometime in the first year or two of age to obtain a normal database, then annually to screen for the development of age-related diseases. Thorough exams nearly always require brief anesthesia. Always contact your hedgehog's veterinarian with questions and concerns- this is a better source for information than pet stores or the internet.