



Hedgehog Foster Care Manual

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Hamworthy Hedgehog Rescue are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO),

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Hedgehog Foster Care: Feeding.

When to feed.

Feed your foster hedgehog once per day. To keep disturbance to a minimum, it is best to feed the hedgehog in the evening as this is when they will naturally be waking up.

What to feed.

Throw away any uneaten food from the day before, and clean the bowl/dish with warm water. Then feed the following once per day;

- 100grams of wet cat food
- Handful of dry cat food/hedgehog biscuits
- Feed amounts discussed if different from above
- Please do not feed anything else – no ‘extras’ or ‘treats’!



Water.

Remember to provide fresh, clean water in a shallow dish every day. Hedgehogs are messy animals and are likely to tip their water dish up, or use it as a toilet! Keep an eye on this and replace the water as often as needed.

Bread and milk.

Please NEVER feed bread or milk. Hedgehogs are lactose intolerant, and so drinking milk can cause them to have stomach pains and diarrhoea. In severe cases, diarrhoea can cause death due to dehydration. Bread has very little nutritional value, but fills hedgehog's stomachs up quickly, causing them to not eat their usual diet. This means that a hedgehog who fills up on bread does not get the nutrients that it needs to survive. Hedgehogs do not need 'treats' of any kind!

If the foster hedgehog stops eating, or appears to have trouble eating, please contact HHR as soon as possible.

Hedgehog Foster Care: Enclosure set-up and cleaning.

How to set-up a hedgehog enclosure.

- Place several layers of newspaper on the bottom of the enclosure. Be sure to remove any staples.
- Put the food and water dishes next to each other at one end of the enclosure.
- Put a generous amount of hay at the opposite end of the food and water dishes. You can also use ripped up newspaper. (Never use shredded paper.)
- If using a heat mat, place it under the bedding end of the enclosure. Make sure the other half of the enclosure is not heated, as it is important that the hedgehog can get away from the heat if it chooses to. It is also important that the food and water is not heated.



Cleaning a hedgehog enclosure (daily).

- First, carefully place the hedgehog in a high-sided box with some bedding to hide in. Make sure the hedgehog cannot climb out!
- Remove the food and water dishes.
- Remove all the newspaper and bedding material.
- Using a hedgehog/pet safe disinfectant, spray the bottom of the enclosure before wiping with blue roll or kitchen towel.
- Wash the food dishes with warm water. Only use a small amount of disinfectant and be sure to wash it off properly.
- Put down fresh sheets of newspaper in the enclosure.
- Refill the food and water dishes and place them back into the enclosure.
- Put the bedding at the opposite end to the food and water.
- Now is a good time to health check and weigh the hedgehog.
- Once finished, gently place the hedgehog back into the enclosure.

Hedgehog Foster Care: Health checking.

Daily health checks:

- Eyes are bright and clean.
- Nose, mouth and ears are all clean and free from discharge.
- Skin is clean and is free of wounds or parasites (ticks, mites, ringworm etc.). Hedgehogs may develop dry skin in captivity which is normal, especially if they are on a heat mat, but please contact HHR so the hedgehog's skin can be checked.
- Spines are not broken or falling out in large numbers (it is normal for hedgehogs to lose a few spines now and then as old ones fall out so new ones can grow, this is called 'quilling').
- Feet are clean and free of sores.
- Listen to the hedgehogs breathing, it should not sound 'chesty' or 'rattle'. If the breathing is wheezy or laboured, contact HHR ASAP.
- Hedgehog can walk 'normally' – no limping or dragging of legs.
- Hedgehog can curl into a tight ball, with no part of its face showing (a hedgehog that cannot curl into a tight ball is overweight and cannot be released. They will be put on a diet, as they will not be able to defend themselves properly otherwise).
- Hedgehog faeces is usually dark brown or black and fairly firm. If it is loose, green in colour or contains blood, contact HHR ASAP.
- Hedgehog appears to be eating and drinking well, with no difficulty.
- Hedgehog should be alert and respond to noise/touch (e.g. should curl into a ball/huff and puff if touched). If the hedgehog is lethargic/laying on its side and/or not reacting to you, please contact HHR immediately.

- Check the hedgehog's weight at least weekly.

A healthy hedgehog!

Eyes bright. Alert. Nose and ears clean. No sores or external parasites seen.



Hedgehog Foster Care: Health checking.

Weighing the hedgehog (weekly).

- Carefully pick up the hedgehog (using thick gloves if required).
- Gently place the hedgehog onto the scales.
- Record the number shown on the scales (grams).
- It is normal for a hedgehog's weight to fluctuate slightly, however if the hog loses more than 10g in a week, or they continue to lose weight, please contact HHR.
- A growing hedgehog may put on as much as 10g a day!
- Please remember to keep noise to an absolute minimum when handling/weighing hedgehogs. They are wild animals and can become stressed easily.



Hedgehog Foster Care: Record keeping.

An example of a completed record sheet is shown below. Fill in the record sheet at least weekly. If the hedgehog is receiving any treatments, please fill it in daily.

Record sheet key:

M = Male

F = Female

B = Baby/hoglet (under 250g – weights are approximate)

J = Juvenile (between 250-450g)

A = Adult (over 450g)

G = Grams

Table 01. Care records.

Date	Time	Weight (g)	Treatment/s	Notes	Initials
10/02/17	12.30	342g	None.	Eating and drinking well.	HD
17/02/17	1.15	397g	None.	Good weight gain.	HD

In the notes section of Table 1; you can write any observations or concerns, or you do not have to write anything at all if everything is fine. The initials column is there just in-case more than 1 person is looking after the hedgehog, so that both/all hedgehog carers can know who and when the hedgehog was cleaned/fed/weighed by etc.