**Hedgehogs – Care Sheet**

**Hedgehogs:** Atelerix albiventris

Normally shy and reclusive, the hedgehog can become a wonderful companion with socialization and patience. Their adorable faces and big personalities are sure to delight their owners, although as with all exotic pets they have some specific care requirements that you should be aware of before bringing your prickly companion home.

**Basic Info**

Age: 3-5 years, can live up to 6-7 years

Sexual maturity: Around 3-4 months

Size: 5-8 inches long

Originally from West and Central Africa

**Behavior**

Being nocturnal, hedgehogs have a very strong sense of smell and are most active at night.

This means you may not want to keep them in your bedroom unless you want to listen to them running on their wheel all night! When frightened or upset, they will roll into a tight ball to protect themselves. They are also best housed individually, but need plenty of socialization with people when they’re young to become tame and friendly. Some adult hedgehogs are never friendly despite socialization, which is something to consider before bringing one home. They also have a behavior known as “self-anointing” when exposed to a strange smell, where they will foam at the mouth and then spread this foam over their bodies. This is a normal behavior in hedgehogs, and can be seen from a young age.

**Diet**

Hedgehogs are primarily insectivores, eating a wide variety of insects, plants, and roots. In captivity, the best option for your hedgehog is a specially formulated diet. A good brand of this is Mazuri, which is very palatable and insectivore specific. You can supplement this with insects such as mealworms or earthworms 3-4 times per week as well as fruits and veggies- although most hedgehogs are very picky about these and you may need to try different kinds to find what they like. If you do choose to feed cat food, it’s important to strictly limit the amount given to 1-2 tbsp per day of an adult indoor formula, as hedgehogs are very prone to obesity on this diet.

**Environment & Caging**

You should give your hedgehog as much room as possible, but 4x2 foot floor space is a good goal. This can be a smooth sided sweater box, glass aquarium, or homemade enclosure. However, it’s important not to have grated floors, as this can damage their feet. For bedding, aspen shavings, recycled paper litters, fleece, and newspaper are all excellent choices (no pine or cedar!). If you use fleece, make sure there are no holes developing that they can get their toes stuck in. Hedgehogs also benefit greatly from a smooth plastic exercise wheel. Maintain their temperatures at around 70-85 degrees Fahrenheit, as they can go into a state of

hibernation if temperatures get too cold. Supplemental heat may

need to be provided in the winter.

**Veterinary Care & Home Care**

We recommend a physical examination every 6-12 months, where we will perform a fecal examination for parasites and do blood tests if necessary. You may also need to have your hedgehog’s nails trimmed, and we can show you how if you’d like to do this at home.

Make sure your hedgehog gets plenty of exercise and limit their food to avoid obesity. Other conditions to look out for (remember to call your vet if you are worried about something) can include respiratory infections, dental disease, GI infections, quill loss due to mites or other skin infections, injuries to their toes or eyes, and neoplasia.