Hedgehog Facts

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

- Hedgehogs have lived on earth since the time of the dinosaurs.
- An adult hedgehog's quills measure between 1/2" and 1" long.
- Hedgehogs can run fast (6 feet per second), climb, dig, and swim.
- While adult humans have 32 teeth, tiny hedgehogs have 36 teeth.
- Hedgehogs are nocturnal, which means they are active at night.

Hedgehogs are interesting animals. They love to explore their surroundings and will play with almost any object they find. There are about 14 species of hedgehogs throughout the world. The African pygmy hedgehog, however, is the variety most commonly kept as a pet. Its scientific name is *Atelerix albiventris*. This name means "white-bellied hedgehog." All hedgehogs have a back that is covered in spines, or quills. When frightened, hedgehogs will roll into a tight, spiny ball to protect themselves. They prefer to live alone without other hedgehog friends. Though they belong to the group of animals that eat insects, hedgehogs actually enjoy a mixed menu. Other foods they eat include worms, snails, snakes, eggs, small fish, and frogs.

What Is It Called?

Common Name	Technical Name
Father	Boar
Mother	Sow
Baby	Piglet or pup
Group	Array

Hedgehogs Around the World

Language	Name for Hedgehogs
Africanese	krimpvarkie
Chinese	ci-wei
French	herisson
Germain	igel
Irish	grainneog
Spanish	erizo

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The Most Common Question About Hedgehogs

My hedgehog never rolls into a spiny ball. Is something wrong with him?

Hedgehogs only roll into tight, spiny balls when they are scared. If your hedgehog has never rolled into a tight ball it means she is happy and content with the home, food, treats, and toys you have offered her. Though a unique trait that is interesting to see, you should never scare your hedgehog so she rolls into a ball. This defense mechanism causes your hedgehog's heart rate to rise and breathing to increase. As you probably know, being scared is no fun!

It is much better to gain your hedgehog's trust and leave the rolling into a ball to those hedgehogs that need that defense in the wild. After all, hedgehogs can be one of the most loyal, active, and friendly pets around. Having a happy hedgehog as a companion is far greater than watching her roll into a ball to protect herself from you. Your hedgehog does, however, probably curl up into a loose ball when she sleeps. If you can get a glimpse of her in her burrow without disturbing her rest, this will give you an idea of how your hedgehog would look when rolled into a ball for defense.

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