

Hello hedgehog, need some help?

WELCOME VISITORS

All animal lovers are really pleased when a hedgehog comes to visit their garden. When winter is imminent, many people worry about whether the creature has enough winter fat and good conditions to survive the cold season in health. How and which ones to help is explained by the vets from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo.

Hedgehogs are a specially protected species and may not simply be caught and put into confinement. Under the terms of the Wildlife Act, sick and injured animals are an exception. And motherless baby hedgehogs, which are obviously helpless, may also be cared for.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF HELP IS NEEDED?

There are various indications of a hedgehog being ill. Is it going about the garden during the daytime, even though it's only supposed to be active at night? Is it lying on the grass? Is it acting lethargic? In warm temperatures, sick animals are mostly surrounded by flies.

Undernourished hedgehogs can be recognised by an untypical indentation at the point where the head merges into the back (healthy animals have no visible neck). Injuries are easily recognised: open wounds, pus or hobbling are clear signs. Orphaned hoglets still lying in the nest will need help fast.

If you see a clearly emaciated hedgehog during a cold-snap - whether it's young or old - you should likewise take it in.

SOME MORE CARE TIPS

- Keep a care-diary: note down when and where you found the hedgehog, its weight and state of health. If you always write notes on how much weight it puts on and which medication it's getting, you will have the best source of information on your fostering.
- Get help from experts: a sick hedgehog needs more than just food and shelter - it needs professional help. So look for a vet or a hedgehog sanctuary.



PET POINTERS

with Maxi Zoo

FIRST AID FOR HEDGEHOGS

Needy hedgehogs are often in a state of shock, some are already seriously chilled. You'll realise this if the hedgehog's belly feels colder than your own hand. To normalise the body temperature, wrap a hand-warm hot water bottle in a towel, place it in a carton and lay the hedgehog on it. Please be wary of heat pads and heating lamps - these are too hot for the creatures. It's very important

that the hedgehog gets liquid. Carefully give it a few drops of unsweetened, lukewarm chamomile or fennel tea - preferably using a pipette. As a layman, you'll have little chance of helping seriously injured and sick animals, so get advice from a vet or hedgehog centre.

HOGLETS AND VERY YOUNG HEDGEHOGS

Hoglets born in late summer or autumn are completely helpless without their mother until six weeks old. Rearing hedgehog orphans isn't possible without professional instruction. Important: never give them cow's milk or baby food. You can get the correct health-building food from your vet.

Even when young hedgehogs can manage their food independently after about the third or fourth week, they still need breast milk. Such young animals are barely capable of surviving as orphans.

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