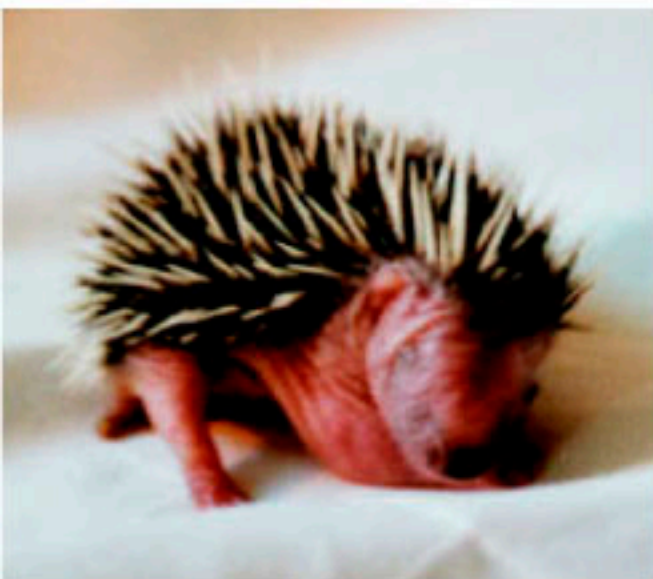


### How can I help?

To encourage a hedgehog into your garden try leaving out some food and fresh water in a shallow container or saucer (even a jar lid). They will eat varieties of cat or dog food (adding some dry food such as science diet helps to keep their teeth clean). They also love raisins, scrambled eggs and apple. REMEMBER, MILK AND BREAD ARE BAD FOR THEM.



### Other things to remember.

When having a bonfire make sure that a hedgehog has not moved in and made its nest or gone to sleep under it before you light it.

Hedgehogs can get tangled up in fruit netting.

If you have a pond make sure there is an easy way out if a hedgehog falls in. A shallow side, overhanging plants or some stones make an easy way out.

Before cutting long grass or strimming around sheds or under hedges, check that it is hedgehog free.

Slug pellets and slugs killed by the pellets are poisonous to hedgehogs. Use an animal friendly alternative.

### Some hedgehog problems to look out for.

- If you see a hedgehog out during the day it will be in trouble.
- Infections, cuts, sores, or fly strike (this looks like dandruff on moist parts of the body, eyes, nose or cuts).
- Snuffling, difficulty in breathing.
- Small hoglets under 350g will not survive hibernation.

If you see a Hedgehog in trouble get in touch with the British National Hedgehog Society, on the number given, they will give you advice and a number of someone in the area that you can take it to.



### Useful telephone numbers for HELP and ADVICE.

RSPCA	0300 1234 999
British Hedgehog Society	01584 890801
RSPCA - North Wilts Branch	10am - 12 noon
Mon - Fri	01793 640136

Remember all volunteers work for no pay.

Other leaflets in this wildlife series include: Fledglings, The pipistrelle bat, Prevention is better than cure.

Photographs and Text © Sue Hulbert 2005

# Hedgehogs

## IN YOUR BACKYARD



## Information Sheet



The South West  
SwanSanctuary



In conjunction  
with the North  
Wilts RSPCA

### About hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs are solitary, nocturnal animals (this means they are active after dusk) and they hibernate during the cold winter months. Their backs are covered in spines which are 2-3cm long and are hollow and springy. These spines taper from 2mm in diameter to a very sharp point. *Did you know there are about 5000 spines on an adult hedgehog?* When they are disturbed or feel threatened they curl up into a ball: this is to protect their belly, chest, throat and legs which are not covered in spines. These parts of the body are covered in a grey-brown hair. Hedgehogs have poor sight so they rely on their good hearing and sense of smell. They are also good climbers and swimmers.

### What do they eat?

Hedgehogs are good friends of the gardener as they eat a variety of garden pests, such as beetles, caterpillars, earwigs slugs and snails. They also eat earthworms, baby mice, young frogs and toads, in fact anything meaty, as well as fruit, berries and eggs.



### When do they breed?

The breeding season is usually between May and September and, after mating, the male hedgehog has no part in bringing up the young. Gestation is 30 to 40 days and there can be up to 8 in a litter but usually only 3 or 4. The baby hedgehogs will stay in the nest for about 3 to 4 weeks until they are weaned. They are self-sufficient after 6 weeks. If you find a hedgehog in a compost heap or under a shed do not disturb it as it might have young. If you find a very young hoglet use a pair of gardening gloves to put it back into the nest. **DO NOT** use your bare hands as the mother will kill it if she smells human scent on it. The mother often sleeps some distance from her young, so do not be surprised if she is not around.

### Where do they hibernate?

They sleep in many places; anywhere dry and warm, in compost heaps, under sheds or hedges. Between November and March (depending on the weather) hedgehogs will build a thick nest out of dry grass, leaves or anything else to keep them dry and warm through the hibernation. If you find a hedgehog hibernating **DO NOT DISTURB IT** as this will use up some of its valuable energy reserves. Young hedgehogs need to weigh at least 350g to survive the hibernation.



In the wild, after every feed, the adult will stimulate its young to go to the toilet. We simulate this natural behaviour with a cotton bud.

