



The Hedgehog Welfare Society



TO PROTECT THE WELL-BEING OF PET HEDGEHOGS THROUGH RESCUE, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR THEM NEWSLETTER #15, MAR/APR 2005

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Julie and her Mom

Breast Cancer: The Disease That Affects Us All

Editor's note: In the past year, breast cancer has "hit close to home" in the hedgehog community. Two very active members of the Hedgehog Welfare Society are currently undergoing treatments for breast cancer. The community has also been touched by the loss of Linda Cassell, who bravely fought breast and ovarian cancer for many years. Julie Hintz, a longtime member of the HWS, also lost her mother to breast cancer in 2000. Julie is a scientist, and has become quite involved in the breast cancer research and awareness community. Thanks to Julie, who generously agreed to share some information with us so we can all be more knowledgeable about breast cancer.

by Julie Hintz, Syracuse, NY

It is said that everyone knows someone in their life who has been touched by breast cancer. The hedgehog community is no exception. Even if you don't know anyone personally, you may have heard of celebrities diagnosed with breast cancer. Melissa Etheridge, Shirley Temple, Edie Falco, Peggy Fleming, Betty Ford, and Olivia Newton-John are just a few examples. Suzanne Somers has been very outspoken about her battle with breast cancer and her decision to forgo conventional treatments, opting instead for homeopathic and spiritual cures.

Several years ago, I knew women who had breast cancer, but none were extremely close to me. I never imagined breast cancer would

affect me personally. But, in the summer of 1998, breast cancer touched my life in ways I never thought possible. My mother was

continued on page 2

In this issue

Breast Cancer	1
All Aboard the Hedge Train	3
Daisy & Blossom Go To School	4
Quills and Comfort	5
Pogs Are People Too	6
Hedge Hero: Deborah Kirksey	7
Pog Profiles	9
Bronx Reptile Rescue	11
Rainbow Bridge Mortality Database	13
The Literary Hedgehog	15

diagnosed in August of 1998, and she passed away in May of 2000. I was only 19 years old.

• Facts and Statistics

Breast cancer is three times more common in women than all gynecologic malignancies put together, and its incidence is steadily increasing. Every year more than 200,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States alone. Every two minutes, a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death in women between the ages of 40 and 55. Breast cancer is also the second leading cause of cancer death in all women, exceeded only by lung cancer.

The incidence of breast cancer is very low in young women in their twenties. It increases gradually with age, plateaus at the age of 45, and increases dramatically after fifty. The disease tends to be much more aggressive in young women and decreases in aggressiveness as age increases. Fifty percent of breast cancer is diagnosed in women who are over the age of 65, indicating the ongoing necessity of yearly screening throughout a woman's life. According to autopsy results of the general population, two percent of the population has undiagnosed breast cancer at the time of death.

One staggering, often overlooked fact is that breast cancer is not just a women's disease. Each year, 16,000 men will be diagnosed and 400 will die from breast cancer.

Despite these statistics, the survival rate for breast cancer remains high when it is detected at an early stage. Monthly exams for both men and women are important, and mammograms remain the best detector of breast cancers.

• Common Myths Associated with Breast Cancer

1 Lumps in the breast are cancerous. 8 out of 10 lumps found in breast tissue are not cancerous. While it seems most lumps are benign, that doesn't mean you should ignore your body. Be proactive in your health care and see a doctor if you detect any lumps or changes in breast tissue. My doctor tells me that she would rather have me call her with a concern and have it turn out to be "nothing", than ignore the problem and have a bigger problem down the road.

2 If family members have had breast cancer, you will have it too. While women who have a family history of breast cancer are placed in a higher risk category, most women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history.

3 Mammograms are dangerous and may cause breast cancer to spread. Mammograms are still the number one diagnostic tool used by doctors to detect breast cancers. If there is no family history, women should begin having a yearly mammogram after age 40. If there is a family history, it is recommended that the first mammogram be done five years before the age of the family member at diagnosis.

• Early Detection is KEY!

Monthly self exams are of utmost importance. Nobody knows your body better than you, and these self exams are important so that you will be able to recognize changes in your own breast tissue. 70% of breast cancers are detected through self exams. Mammograms can detect lumps not found in self exams. When breast cancer is found early, the five year survival rate is over 95%.

• What are risk factors associated with breast cancer?

Diets high in saturated fat are associated with increased rates of breast cancer. Early onset of menses and late onset of menopause also correlate with increased rates of breast cancer. Moderate obesity, prior history of breast cancer, estrogen replacement therapy, late or no pregnancies, family history, being female, and therapeutic irradiation of the chest wall (i.e. for Hodgkin's disease-cancer of lymph nodes) are all associated with an increased risk for breast cancer.

• What are the treatments for breast cancer?

There are several different types of breast cancers, and the type and stage of the cancer determines the treatment. In the Hedge Hero article, Deborah mentioned that her treatment included chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Surgery is also an option in some cases.

Besides the different types of breast cancers, there are also hormonal factors to be considered when determining treatments. Some (most) breast cancer cells have estrogen/progesterone receptors and respond

continued on page 3

Breast Cancer has touched the lives of several members of the Hedgehog Welfare Society. Both Deborah Kirksey and Kimberly Clark are currently being treated for breast cancer. We know their strength and spirit will bring these courageous women to a full recovery.

Breast cancer has also touched our friends and families. Julie Hintz wrote about her mother in her article. Donnasue Graesser has several friends who are breast cancer survivors, and is a regular participant in the Susan G. Komen Foundation's Race for the Cure. Tonya Thomas also shared an inspiring story about her Grandmother, "I remember when I was about ten years old going and seeing my Granny Billie in the hospital. She sat me down on the side of the bed and told me she was going to have surgery for breast cancer. At the time I didn't understand that much about it, but as I grew up I understood all she had been through. She was cancer-free the rest of her life, and passed just eight years ago from heart problems. I miss her so much but never will forget the message she gave me of how important breast exams are.

And, we all fondly remember Quilliam's mom, Linda Cassell (pictured below), who fought a brave battle with breast cancer for many years. Linda demonstrated her boundless energy as the co-organizer of the Suncoast Hedgehog Show, only months before her final illness. We will all remember Linda's bright smile, wisdom, creativity, and, most of all, her love for Quilliam.



Linda Cassell and Quilliam

to hormonal treatment. There is more research available concerning these types of cancers, therefore the prognosis is very promising for these types of cancer.

• So, what can we all do?

It doesn't take a lot of time or money to help the cause of breast cancer research. Every little bit helps, even if it's just the click of a computer mouse! There are many foundations dedicated to finding a cure for breast cancer. Most people have heard of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. This foundation is responsible for The Race for the Cure and other educational awareness programs. Susan G. Komen sponsors pink Kitchen Aid standing mixers and Yoplait pink yogurt tops, all to raise money for education.

There is also the Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Foundation. Carol Baldwin, the mother of the famous Baldwin brothers (Alec, Daniel, Billy, Stephen), is

also a breast cancer survivor. The Baldwin family is from the next town over from mine, so it was easy for me to get involved with the Baldwin Foundation. I began volunteering shortly after my mom passed away. I volunteer at various events, such as golf tournaments, the state fair, and mall booths that the foundation sets up at Christmas time. It makes me feel better after the tragedy that I experienced, and it feels good knowing that I can do something to honor my mom. We accept donations and sell items such as T-shirts, pins, magnets, and jewelry. 100% of the profits go towards breast cancer research. Each year three or four grants are given in memory of people who have died of breast cancer. My mother's memory was honored with one of these \$50,000 grants in 2001.

If your time and money are scarce, there are still little things you can do to contribute to breast cancer research. The Check Gallery (www.checkgallery.com) offers checks with

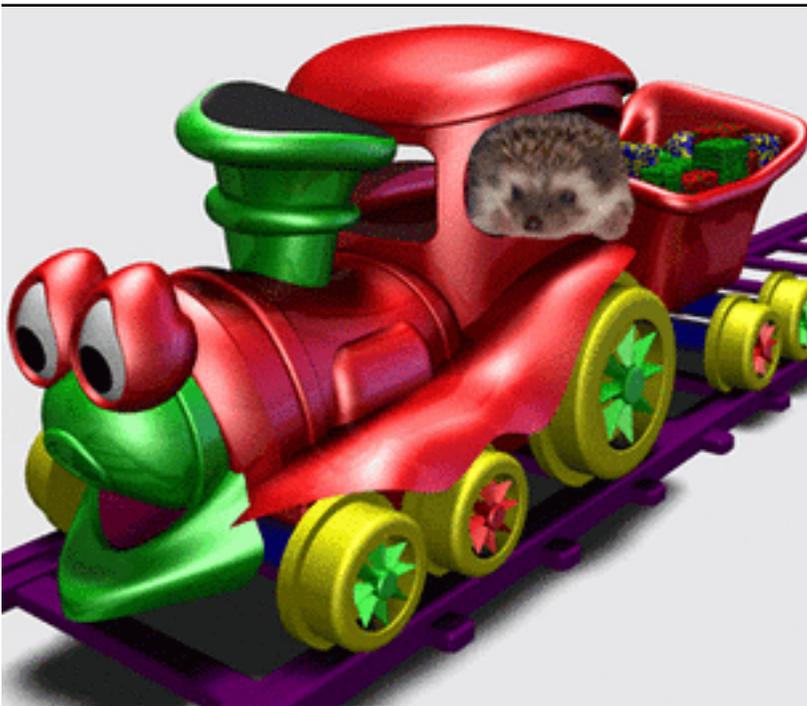
the pink ribbon symbol printed on them. A portion of the proceeds from the sales of these checks is donated to The National Breast Cancer Foundation. One small, but VERY important contribution can be made by clicking daily on "the breast cancer" site (<http://www.thebreastcancersite.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/CTDSites>). By clicking on the "fund free mammograms" button, you can help to donate free mammograms to women in need. Every click counts!

Credits:

www.nationalbreastcancer.org
www.pinkribbon.com
www.thebreastcancersite.com

Links:

www.nationalbreastcancer.org
www.pinkribbon.com
www.thebreastcancersite.com
www.komen.org
www.findacure.org (Carol Baldwin's site)



All Aboard the Hedgie Train!

Stephanie Hyne & Donnasue Graesser, conductors

Sometimes a hedgehog needs to be rescued from location "A", but the perfect forever home for that hedgehog is hundreds of miles away at location "B." How does the hedgie get from point A to point B? He gets a one-way ticket and hops aboard the hedgie train!

The hedgie train is a group of individuals who are willing to drive a bit to help transport rescued hedgehogs to permanent homes. Participants travel in "legs" of a train, each traveling whatever distance is reasonable for that person. For example, in a recent train a hedgie that was rescued in Maryland is being transported first to New Jersey, then to Connecticut, then to Massachusetts, then to her final home in New Hampshire.

The train is set up as a yahoo group e-mail list. Anyone with safe, reliable transportation and a soft spot in his or her heart for hedgehogs is encouraged to participate. Even if you do not drive, but might be willing to be a pit stop for other drivers, your help will be appreciated! The purpose of the hedgie train e-mail list is to allow one-stop efficient organization of trains to bring rescue hedgehogs to their forever homes. The list enables those willing to participate in hedgehog transportation to put their information on file, so those organizing trains can contact them if transportation is necessary in that area. People arranging rescue trains can announce the need for legs in the train to a group ready and eager to participate. Posts for train needs can be cross-posted from any other hedgie or rescue list. The hedgie train is strictly for rescue purposes. It is not utilized for the transport of "bred and sold" hoglets.

Whether you are willing to drive 10 miles, 100 miles, or just to be a pit stop for other drivers, we welcome you to join the hedgie train list.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hedgehogtrain>

Daisy & Blossom Go To School

Blossom & Daisy Plombon, as dictated to Jennifer Plombon, Minneapolis, MN

Greetings, all persons who wish to learn more about hedgehogs! A few months ago, we traveled to the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota, to teach vet students more about us, and to encourage them to consider seeing hedgehogs in their practices when they graduate. We thought that perhaps they were afraid to touch our quilly selves, and hoped to make them feel more comfortable around us.

First, Mom applied for and received her USDA Class C license. This is needed to teach or exhibit on a regular basis; one can apply for a one-time exemption if teaching or exhibiting only once, but having the license ensures that one is meeting all requirements and it is recommended, even if teaching rarely. It wasn't hard to get at all! The paperwork was requested through the USDA (visit www.hedgehogwelfare.org and click on the USDA link to find phone numbers for your region). Our vet had to come to our house and visit us and talk about food and health, then the USDA inspector came to see us. She came one more time for a surprise visit, and will come surprise us again in the next 6 months. Then she will visit us once per year. Mom feels very secure having that license in her hand. And we feel very important, being on the official-looking paperwork!

So, what was school like? It was pretty cold that morning! Our friend Sarah S came along with her hedgeboy, Boris, in case anyone wanted to see boy parts; she took us all into the building to stay warm while Mom parked the car. Mom and Sarah set up a couple of playpens on tables in the front of the room, and then let us all hide under our hats. Then Mom talked to the students and showed slides (the students were in their third year already; about time they learned about hedgehogs, we'd say!) about all sorts of stuff, such as:



Handling: how to encourage us to unroll; the effective use of a glass pan to look at tummies we think are hidden; how to know when a bite is coming and how to get free of one.

Our Bodies, Ourselves: what quills are made of, what our teeth are like and how many we have, how our feet work, how our eyes work, what to do to care for our ears, how to keep water out of our "upside-down" noses, why the "reverse Mohawk" is a good thing, what girl and boy parts look like, and how to give us anesthesia.

Things That Hurt Us or Make Us Sick: hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver disease) and ways to prevent it, mites and other parasites, WHS, oral/facial/cranial tumors, uterine problems, lymphoma, urinary tract and upper respiratory infections, cardiac disease, and problems with our feets and legs (Blossom allowed Mom to demonstrate nail clipping with wee little scissors.)

What Our Persons Need to Know: habits (no one anointed, unfortunately, because the students would have LOVED that!); habitat; who might live with whom (some of us don't share well with others); medications and how to give them (in a cricket, please, or else make it really tasty); breeding; diet (rest assured we encouraged the feeding of

insects and some salmon-fruit); The Dreaded Bath (we had hoped Mom would forget to bring that up); how to make our lives more fun (please hide our treats and insects in our homes so we can search for them); and our suitability as pets.

After all this dry talk, the students came up to meet us! Oh, they were enchanted by our lovely selves! I, Blossom, showed them what a calm and curious hedgehog is like. I, Daisy, showed them what a careful and cautious hedgehog is like. Boris showed them what a boy hedgehog is like. We showed off tummies, feeties, noses and cute little ears. Brave Blossom crawled up on a woman's shoulder and became thoroughly entangled in her hair and had to be extricated. Brave Daisy allowed balm to be put on her ears. Brave Boris allowed students to peek at his tummy. The students were suitably impressed with all of us, and none of us bit anyone. It went very well and we think we will see more veterinarians willing to take care of us in the future. Mom hopes to provide the lecture outline, the handling tips, and USDA licensing information to other persons who wish to teach at the vet schools in their area. Oh, hedgehog friends, we can help people learn so much about us, and it's fun, too!

Quills and Comfort

It Takes a Village

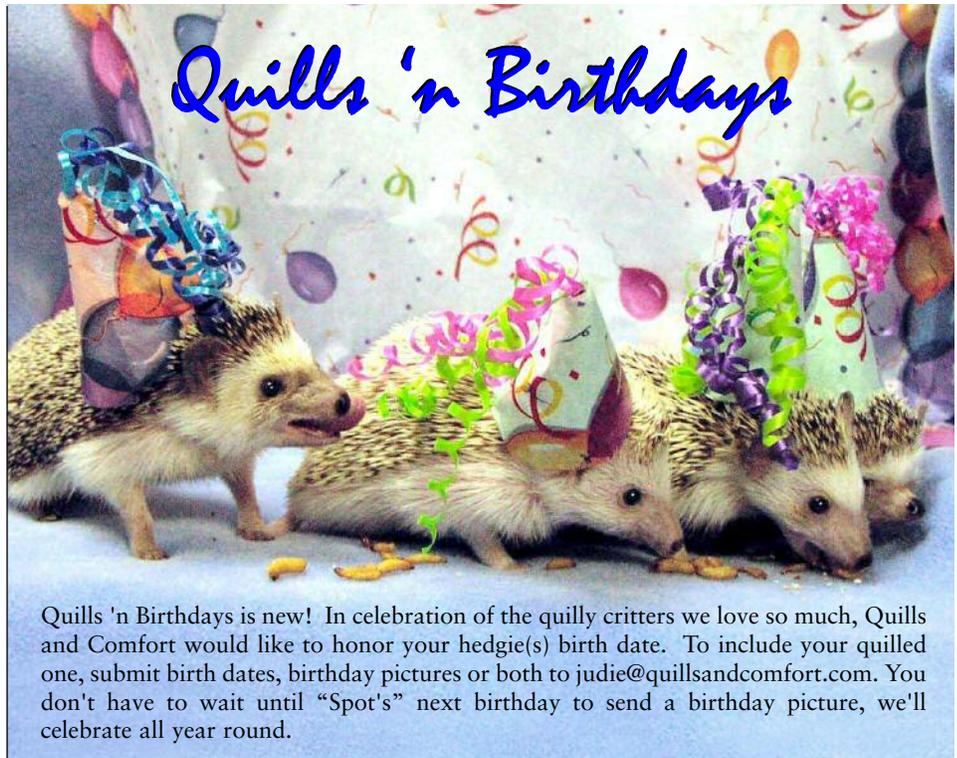
by Judie Peters, Bluffton, SC

From its conception Quills and Comfort was designed to be a support and outreach program for hedgeie companions. The Circle of Light was our first support program and continues to be a great comfort and solace for grieving companions. We are pleased to continue expanding Quills and Comfort by including "Quills 'n Birthdays", Naomi Wikane's "Healing Candle Ceremony", plus a new CafePress Store.

Quills and Comfort has become the sum total of many outreach programs which are a labor of love for the dedicated people who coordinate each program. Carol Fish Kregear developed and coordinates the Circle of Light which honors hedgegies who have departed our earthly confines. Tonya Thomas developed the idea of sending condolence cards, and faithfully mails Quills and Comfort cards to grieving hedgeie companions. Aimee Hassler is our web-lass who donates her web expertise. Naomi Wikane will overview her Healing Candle Ceremonies in our next newsletter. I have put the Quills and Comfort hedgeie graphics I love to design on the CafePress store (cafepress.com/judiepeters), with all profits donated to HWS. And, newly developed is a program to honor our quilly critters called "Quills 'n Birthdays". Additionally, Jennifer Plombon faithfully gathers and records names for the Circle of Light and Quills and Comfort Cards and generally helps keep us (me) organized. So, to borrow an already well-used phrase, it takes a village.



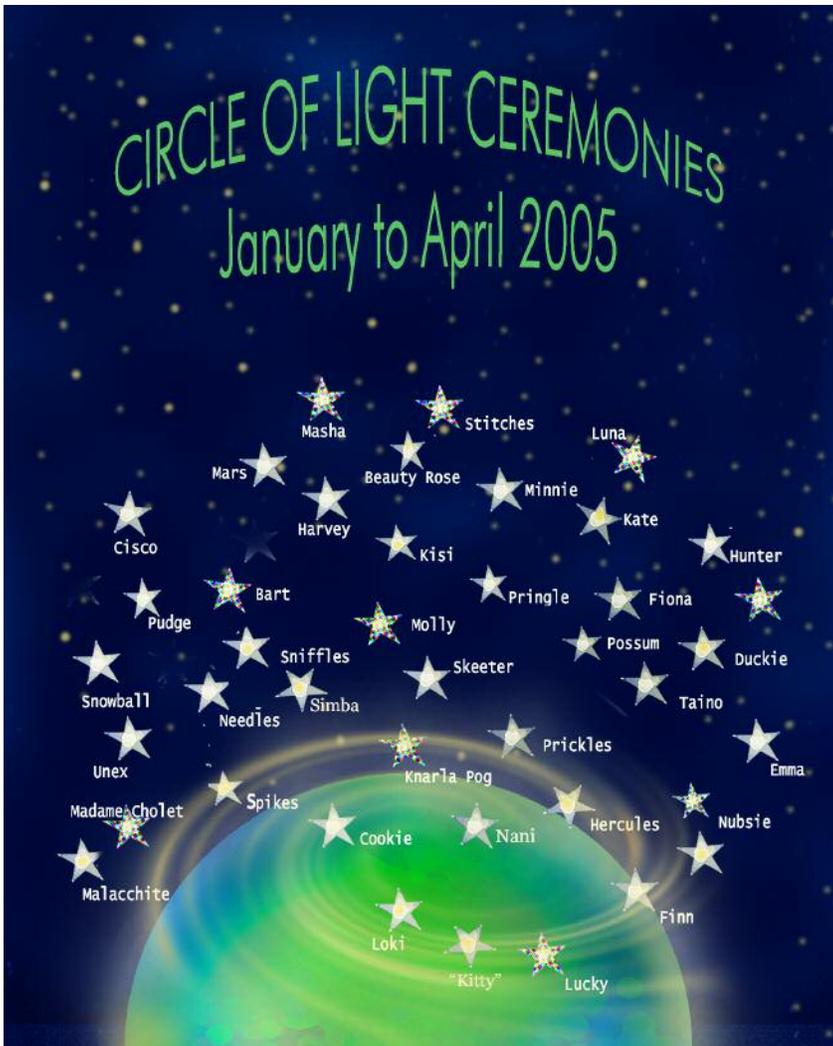
Quills and Comfort Card, featuring Quillem from the "All Hedgehogs go to Heaven" series.



Quills 'n Birthdays is new! In celebration of the quilly critters we love so much, Quills and Comfort would like to honor your hedgeie(s) birth date. To include your quilled one, submit birth dates, birthday pictures or both to judie@quillsandcomfort.com. You don't have to wait until "Spot's" next birthday to send a birthday picture, we'll celebrate all year round.

The Year in Birthdays

- Lola - February 8, '04
- Snowdrop - February 27, '04
- Keelin - February 12, '04
- Cupid - February 11, '02
- Presley - March 24, '04
- Hobie - October 4, '03 (Gotcha Day)
- Master Artie - October 20, '03
- Malu - October 27, '04 (Gotcha Day)
- Buodicca - October 27, '04
- Elvis - October 2000
- Baby Bug - October 28, '04
- Bugsy - October 28, '04
- Portia - July 4, 2003
- Dulcinea - July 20, '04
- Vanilla Bean - July 29, '04
- Popcorn - July 29, '04
- Buddy - July 16, '02
- Sophie - July 6, 2002
- Molly - July 26, '04
- Tenzing - July 8, '04
- Sweet Pea - August 25, '03
- Miss Margie - August 12, '04
- Wolverine - August 20, '05
- Mistress Pinnypin - August 25, '01
- payton - August 31, '02
- Aramis - January 1, '02
- Hershey - January 1, '03
- Spike - January 3, '03
- Bucky - January 16, '04
- Grover - January 29, '04
- Lucy - June, '04
- Elsie - June 22, '02
- Pinky - June, '00
- Poco - June 9, '02
- Blossom - May 12, '04
- Daisy - May 12, '04
- Zanithia - May 1, '05
- Megan - May 25, '02
- Lulu - May 19, '03
- Bean - May 19, '03
- Miss Penelope Anne - September 9, '03
- Miss Pepper - 2002
- Coco - September 23, '03
- Colette - September 20, '05
- Dasher - April, '01



January 22, 2005

Hunter (dog) (guardians Tonya and Rick)
 Mars (guardian Sondra & Kimberly)
 Nubsie (guardian Vicki)
 Cisco (guardian Judith B)
 Stitches (cat) (guardian Steph)
 Masha (guardian Kimberly C)
 Luna (guardian Pat S)
 Emma (guardian Kerri)
 Kate (guardian Jen W)
 Taino and Minnie (Yorkie) (guardian Robin A)
 Loki & Prickles (guardian Kathleen)
 Beauty Rose (guardian Jan)
 Kiwi (guardians Laurel, Wayne, Aunt Mabel)
 Harvey (guardian Jane)
 Lady Puddles Amber "Pudge" (guardian Jeanne)
 Duckie (guardian Cris)
 Possum (guardian Donnasue)
 Finn (guardians Aimee and Jim)

March 20, 2005

Fiona (guardian Robyn)
 Cookie (guardian Judie)
 Madame Cholet (guardian Jane)
 Molly (guardian Naomi)
 Lucky, Hercules & Nani (guardian Dawn W)
 Knarla Pog (guardians Heather & Chopper)
 Pringle (guardian Denise)
 Needles (guardian Beth)
 Malachite (guardian Katie)
 Emma (guardian Kerri)
 Unex (guardian Cindy)
 Sniffles (guardian Jan)
 Snowball (guardians Linda & Gary)
 Skeeter (guardian B)
 Bart (guardian Lin)
 Spikes (guardian Andrea)
 "Kitty" (saviours Ashley & Andrew)
 Simba (guardian Brenda)

Corner by Deb Weaver, Milwaukee Wisconsin

The Favorite

Grover and Gabby were best buddies from the day Gabby came to live with us. Very few cross snuffles were ever exchanged between the two.

It's our habit to all hang out on the sofa together when relaxing. The "favorite" corner (i.e., the one furthest away from Mom) is highly coveted by the kids. Most of the time the corner was shared, but not always.

Grover had managed to score the favorite corner two nights in a row, and didn't move out of it despite Gabby's best attempts to convince him to do so. The third night he once again beat her to the corner. Gabby came back to my end, sat, and stared at a peacefully sleeping Grover, who was unaware that he soon would be a hedgehog in flight.

All of the sudden, Gabby took off at a full run. Upon reaching Grover she dove under him, keeping those back legs churning. Well, he was bumped up on to his back and then launched out of the corner, landing a good 10 inches from where he started. He looked around like "what the heck?", saw Gabby now contentedly wedged in to the favorite corner, gave a big sigh and went back to sleep.

Pogs Are People Too



Grover and Gabby

Hedgie Hero: Deborah Kirksey, A Hero in many ways

This month our Hedgie Hero column focuses on a very special lady, Deborah Kirksey. Many of us know Deborah from hedgehog gatherings, Internet hedgehog lists, and personal friendships. We know her for her compassionate spirit, her fabulous, famous hedgie costumes, as well as for her superb chocolate treats! Deborah has been extraordinarily active in hedgehog rescue, as the founder and caretaker of **A Spiny Place Hedgehog Rescue**. In recent months, we have missed Deborah's active presence on the hedgehog lists, as she has been courageously dealing with the challenge of breast cancer. Her optimism and strength during these past several months is an inspiration to us all.

Deb, her husband Kenneth, and all the Spiny Place residents live in Boone, North Carolina. Their extended human family includes her mom (Evelyne), sister (Stacie), brother-in-law (Kirk), and in-laws (Carolyn, Jerry, and Brett). The star of the family is Deb's 2-year old niece, Lanie. (she was given her very special Aunt Deborah's middle name). Deborah and I share a special bond through Lanie and Simon. We anxiously awaited the births of these two little people together, and shared the joy of their arrival on the same day.

Deb enjoys being a part of the hedgie community for very simple reasons: *"Being able to help others with their hedgies, help hedgies in need, going to shows and being with hedgie friends."* The search for her first hedgehog began with a glimpse of a hedgehog on the Discovery Channel. She and Kenneth found their first hedgie, Quillen, at a pet store: *"He was a very small hedgie, and was sick, but I wanted him anyway. I refused to return him even after 3 months of syringe feeding him and doctor visits. He was the first hedgie love of my life and he got me started into rescue and education."* Quillen was the start of the labor of love that Deb created with her rescue. She went through the effort of securing a USDA license, and has taken in many, many, many needy hedgies over the years.

Current residents of A Spiny Place include Sam Wise, McKinnon, and Tuffnel (a 5-



year-old rescue). Sammy is special to Deb because he is Frodo's son, and the last descendent of her original hedgies. McKinnon is from Pat Storm's Eclipse. Deb and Kenneth helped transport Eclipse and Luna in the famous "platinum hedgie train" from Florida to Buffalo, New York. The hedgies at Spiny Place are joined by furred, but non-quilled, cats Cassie and Loki. To learn more about Deb's incredible rescue efforts and her adorable residents, see their website at: www.aspinyplace.com

In her "life outside of hedgies" Deb was trained in insurance and real estate and has been at her present job in office management for 20 years! She enjoys her job, but is at a place in her life where she would like to be at home more often to enjoy the little things in life: Spending more time with her mom, sister, and baby niece and getting to hold hedgies more! Her secret wish is *"that I never had to go back to work again and could afford to stay at home (healthy of course)!"* Although Deb's life has always been focused on kindness and friendship, her perspective has been influenced by several events this past year. Deb wrote at length about the challenges she faced in 2004, and I would like to share Deb's story in her own words:

"2004 has got to be one of the top worst years I have ever experienced. I lost 8 hedgies, 2 grandmothers, Sara (Lisa's daughter), Linda Cassell, and I was diagnosed with breast cancer after returning from Linda's Memorial. That was the beginning of a long and tiring journey."

"Upon receiving this devastating information, Kenneth and I dove into any research that we could find on the topic. One of the best known cancer centers for women in North Carolina is the **Hope Women's Cancer Center** located in Asheville, North Carolina, which is over 2 hours away from us. I called and made an appointment, and Kenneth and I embarked on a journey to make me well again."

"The first step was to determine what type and size of cancer I had. This is determined by a procedure called Stereotactic Biopsy. This surgery is done while under local anesthesia and a pencil size tube is inserted close to the cancer site. Then a vacuum sucks the surrounding tissue into the tube and a razor comes and cuts the tissue off. A metal chip is inserted in the area as a tag marker for future surgery. The Stereotactic procedure showed that I had 2 types of cancer: ductal carcinoma, and intraductal carcinoma. Ductal carcinoma is a cancer that is still in the mammary ducts and has not spread outside of this area. Intraductal carcinoma has spread outside of the ducts to the surrounding areas"

"After we received this information, 8 doses of chemotherapy treatment were prescribed. I would receive one chemotherapy treatment every other week for sixteen weeks, followed by thirty-three radiation treatments. In order to do the chemotherapy, I had to have a port inserted under my chest in which to deliver the drugs. This made drawing blood and delivering the chemo much less stressful and easier for my veins. Even after studying the effects of the types of chemo that would be administered, Kenneth and I were still unprepared for some of the side effects. My treatments were hard. Most people don't have all the side effects or even any of the side effects. There is always the usual: hair loss, taste and smell affected, and of course tiredness. What they don't tell you, is that the tiredness isn't one that you can overcome. This is a tired that you can't push yourself through. You're down for the count. The chemo takes about 2 or 3 days to get into your system completely. My bed, vibrating heated mat, and a hot bath were my best friends. Chemotherapy drugs kill off many types of cells, (good and bad).

continued on page 8

Therefore all your red and white blood cell counts are lowered. You are extremely tired, and you can catch a cold at the drop of a hat. When this happens they have to give shots to rejuvenate the blood cells. These shots can and do cause intense joint pain and make you feel as though you have a very bad flu. You ache all over but especially in your joints. Simple tasks like walking become very taxing on your system. So you decide what is most important for you to do that day, and the rest has to go undone just so you will have enough energy to do the one thing that counts the most."

"This is where my mother and Kenneth came in. My mother came over every Saturday of every week and cleaned my house. All I could do was watch her putter away while I lay in the bed or on the couch. I wanted to get up and help, but my body just couldn't do it. Kenneth kept my hedgegies fed, watered, and their cages clean during this whole ordeal. There were days when I didn't think that I could make it another day, but Mom, Kenneth, my church family, and my hedgegie family would cheer me on to get through this. So, I'd go to the next treatment and the next and the next. Always knowing that no matter what I went through, someone would be there with me. When you go through something this trying you really see (sometimes for the first time) who your true friends are. People you can always count on no matter how bad it gets. People that love you no matter how you look or feel. These are the true friends in life."

"You also learn to value things you haven't valued before. Like spending time with your family and friends, sitting outside in the sunshine with hedgegies running around in the grass around you, God's love and grace, a good night's sleep, your health, and just the beauty that is all around us and in each and every one of us. I'm still counting the days until all of this seems like just a bump in the road. I know that without all the support that I received that bump would have been an insurmountable mountain that I would not have been able to climb. Thank you to all my hedgegie friends, new and old, my family, friends, co-workers, and my church family. But most of all, I thank God that I was given this trial, journey, task. whatever you want to call it, because I have come out stronger with my eyes a little more open and my heart truly blessed."

Even during this very challenging time in her life, Deb still always puts others first. I will never forget the wisdom, strength, and

compassion she has shared with me during some personal struggles in the past year. Deb, I will always cherish the comforting words you have shared with me during long, tearful phone calls.

Despite her illness, Deb always seems to have the energy to give of herself. She manages to combine her extraordinary kindness, her skills as a chocolatiere, and her love of hedgegies. When speaking of the activities in which she is involved, Deb's priorities are very evident: *"Presently, I'm making chocolates and hedgegie soaps for the Cancer Center, Radiation Department, and my veterinarian. I have also joined the Hospital Volunteer program that I am supposed to start after all my treatments are over. I will be able to help other cancer and kidney dialysis patients. In 2 years, I will be able to join the American Breast Cancer Society program to do counseling for other breast cancer patients."*

We all know that our bond in the hedgehog community goes far beyond our love of quilly companions. Deb's story is a perfect example of the very meaningful relationships we all share. Deb tells us: *"The past year has been very hard for me, and I don't know what I would have done without my hedgegie friends. You all have been a constant support and encouragement to me. Not a day went by that I didn't hear from someone in the community, which made this whole ordeal go by much quicker. Now I'm almost at the end of that journey and I can't believe I have made it through so fast. The hedgegie community has always been there for me even in my darkest hours and those times will never be forgotten."*

Deb has been a hero and a blessing to so many of us long before she became ill. Her thoughtfulness and compassion towards animals and people is a model for us all to aspire to. In the hedgehog community, we all appreciate the special gifts of Deb Kirksey, who is truly a hero in so many ways. She has enriched the lives of countless hedgegies and humans. These are some thoughts from the hedgegie community on our dear friend, Deborah.

Judie Peters shares her admiration for Deb, "Although I knew Deb via email prior to her illness, I felt I got to know the real Deborah as she progressed through cancer treatments. She was upbeat and funny, and wrote amusing 'blogs' on what it was like to be Deborah Kirksey. I've told her several

continued on page 9

Deb is famous for her Hedgegie Costumes - words can't describe how cute these are!



Mackinnon



Maisey in Paris



Marshy



Sweet Elsie

times she is my idol. Given the same situation, I could only hope to be half as brave and cheerful as Deborah.”

Jennifer Plombon is honored to know Deborah, “Deborah Kirksey is the bravest person I have ever met. Her courage and optimistic outlook in the face of scary circumstances are an inspiration to me. Regardless of her own worries, Deborah always puts the needs of others before her own, particularly the needs of her beloved hedgehogs. Deborah took and framed a photo of my dear Norma shortly before she died, and presented it to me after she crossed. It was so incredibly kind of her, I'll never forget it. I am honored to know Deborah!”

Tonya and Rick Thomas are lucky to live close enough to Deb for an occasional visit: “Deborah was the very first person I talked to after we rescued our first Hedgehog Prickles. Within the week she had sent Prickles the right kind of food and his very first wheel. Our friendship grew from there. Deborah is one of the sweetest, kindest people I know. I do have to say, she is my most favorite person to go shopping with. Deb, we all Love you very much!”

Elsie and Aramis are two lucky hedgies who were rescued and fostered by Deb: “Mom Deborah we Love you very much. Thank you for rescuing us and bringing us to our forever home with Mom, and Dad. Love you always, Elsie, and Aramis...”

Pat Storm has just the right words to describe Deborah, and I'm sure we all agree, “I have never met a person like Deborah. She is one of the most gracious and classy, yet comfortable, loving people I have ever met. Her devotion to her hedgies and husband are beyond reproach. She deserves only the best in her life.

I'd like to close with a little story from **Deb Weaver**. Deb W. sums up so well the many blessings of Deb K: “At the Niagara show we walked together part of the way for the Rainbow Bridge ceremony. She was putting on her garbage bag (remember it rained that morning, and that's all we could find for her), and she was already tearing up thinking about all the hedgies who had crossed. I'm not sure there are many (any?) in the hedgie world who care so well for their hedgies. And her costumes!!!! Wow!!!!!! And she can pack more in to a suitcase than one would humanly think possible. She's perfect for our Hedgie Hero I'm sure all the hedgies think of her this way!!!!!!”

Pog Profiles

This column introduces our readers to some of the wonderful hedgies with whom HWS members share their lives. Each "profilee" is given a list of 15 questions and chooses some of them to answer.

In this issue, we profile Poog (below), who is the head of the House of Poog and lives with Vicki McLean in Oregon.



Poog, head of House of Poog

The Questions

Q: *What is your favorite food, and do you think you get enough of it?*

A: I love salmon-fruit. It is by far my very favoritest fruits and vegetables. It isn't possible to get enough. My care person says I make a pig of myself every time I eat it. Oh—wait!!! I AM a pig. Anyway, I have salmon-fruit hanging from all sides of my mouth whenever Care Person gives me some. She also says I'm rude about it but I don't care.

Q: *Which recreational activities do you pursue?*

A: Wheeling is pretty special. Care Person likes to hear my wheel going every single night. She knows I'm healthy then. I don't get off of it much. I also like to run up my loft and shove the stuffed hedgehog off and jump off after it. I like to bounce on my hind legs and supervise the weekly hedgehog cleaning. The neighbor kids come over and help tear everything down and prepare it for Care Person's weekly routine—every week. Auntie Jennifer helped do it one week and I was soooo afraid she'd do it wrong. I watched and watched, bounced and bounced and checked everything twice — no — three times before I was satisfied she did it right.

Q: *Do you have a significant other?*

A: Yes, I do. I had a lovely wee white wife Baby Sufi. She is Mommie to my three beautiful daughters but she flew over the Rainbow Bridge way too suddenly a while back. I miss her. One day I looked down at her cage and she was gone and some boy named Hamlet was there. My three little daughters are the Frisbee Sisters. Skeeeeezee was a pretty special lady too, and she will have a chapter all her own in

continued on page 10

my book. So will my pretty wife. Pretty Baby Sufi was the half sister of THE macho Hawgy Goldbutt. Poco is quite the shapely lass too. She visited my day spa for a week and improved the sights a bit. That perky little dame has energy!!

Q: *What is your philosophy of life?*

A: Demand respect and admiration. We deserve it! Not just admiration, but rather "profound" admiration. If at some point your Care Person fails to give it — bite. After all, I'm three years old now and I know lots of things.

Q: *What do you think it's like across the Rainbow Bridge?*

A: I think it's light, and warm and full of love. It must be if my wee little wife is there.

Q: *How do you show your affection for your human caretaker(s)?*

A: I love to watch movies on Care Person's shoulder underneath an old shirt. Care Person really likes it when I do this. She says my arms and legs stream down her shoulder. She also says I fall asleep (She says I snore. Can you imagine?) and lose the plot, but she's never mentioned it because she's afraid it will hurt my feelers. I call these couch sits. If Care Person makes me angry, I need three couch sits before I will let her pick me

up without biting her again. Three, not two. Three.

Q: *How do you like your human caretakers to show affection for you?*

A: Awww. Care Person lets me sleep on her shoulder. Or, sometimes she holds me next to her heart and gives me Reiki. That is so warm and comfortable. Other times she gives me salmon-fruit or silkworms.

Q: *How do you want to be remembered?*

A: I want to be remembered with respect and profound admiration as head of the household. I'm responsible for setting the rules at the House of Poog. I even set the rules for the hospice bed here and the day spa. Annabelle, whose histopathology showed astrocytoma, was in the hospice bed for several months until she crossed the Rainbow Bridge. Scarlet, who had cancer, is in that bed. Nubsie, the dear California girl spent a brief time there but she didn't like being sick and contrived to flee across the bridge quickly. I want to be remembered as a very competent head of household.

Q: *Do you have a favorite saying?*

A: Yes I do. "Bite first, ask questions later." If you need to ask forgiveness then do so.

Q: *Where is your favorite place?*

A: I have two favorite places. One of them is in the catacombs I create underneath all the layers of cage liners and vellum each week. The second place is on Care Person's shoulder under the old shirt.

Q: *If your human caretaker quotes you in email messages, do you think your thoughts are communicated accurately?*

A: Oh absolutely. She knows I like profound admiration and she knows why I bite. We do have good conversations from time to time when I share how important it is for her to have me run the hedgehog room. I remind her how hard I work.

Q: *What is something that very few people know about you?*

A: Secretly I'm a perfectionist. I mean, after all, Auntie Jennifer COULD have made a royal mess of the hedgehog room. She definitely needed my supervision. I'm also OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) which puts me in very good company.

Q: *What piece of advice do you have for all human caretakers?*

A: Care Persons should love us, hold us and listen to us. We are wiser than most Care Persons know. Keep us clean and feed us well and we will love you with a love that is unconditional.

What's New at Ruby's Rescue Shop?

Proceeds from the sale of Ruby's Rescue Shop items go towards rescue, research and education. Check back often as new items are always being added! www.hedgehogwelfare.org



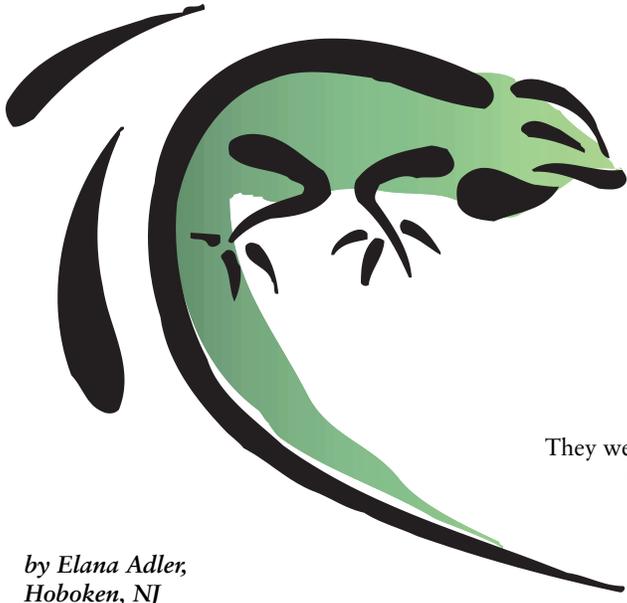
Hemp Hogs. Decadent milk chocolate hedgehog-shaped truffles with hemp nut cream filling. Extremely unique and tasty human treats. Produced by "Rene Rey" of Canada.



A string-type "book thong" bookmark. Adorned with beautiful glass and metal beads, including a ceramic hedgehog, on a waxed linen thread. Handmade by our very own Naomi Wikane.



Blank greeting cards. Hand stamped by Darcie Carter. Each package contains a variety of five cards of different colors and designs. The cards are hand stamped, with beautiful embellishments.



by Elana Adler,
Hoboken, NJ

This story is a fine example of how hedgehog friends come together to help all animals in need. My friend, Geri, lived above a dealer of reptiles and birds. This dealer was known as both Bronx Reptiles and Bronx Birds. For months, Geri had complained about finding lizards in her house and around the building. I encouraged her to catch them and bring them to me or a reptile rescue. I also encouraged her to notify the local branch of the SPCA. Geri followed my advice, however, nothing ever came of her complaints.

On October 12th, 2004, while we were at work, Geri and I found out that a Boa Constrictor had been run over by a commuter train behind her house. We were both very concerned, and when Geri got home she discovered that the reptile dealer had left the building, taking all of his animals. When Geri came to work the following day, she informed me that there were animals loose in the building, but when I offered to go over and help she was hesitant to accept my offer, as she knew the situation was bad. However, she agreed to let me come over on Saturday the 16th of October to evaluate the situation and to look for what animals I could. This dealer reportedly had hedgehogs, chinchillas, cavy, rats, reptiles, snakes, and amphibians. I posted this information to the Hedgehog Welfare list and Linda Fine immediately offered to come and help. Kelly and Sean Sosik-Hamor also agreed to make the long drive from Massachusetts to assist.

Upon arrival we could smell how bad it was. Linda immediately caught 3 small lizards.

The Bronx Reptile Rescue:

A tale of rats, tarantulas, hissing cockroaches, and hedgehog friends.

They were doing poorly, even though she had given them some sort of reptile revival food. The basement warehouse was filthy. Cages looked as if they had been suddenly emptied of large reptiles and mammals. Geri had heard from the building super that there was a cavy or hedgie running loose. There were dead animals in all the cages, including lizards of a species we could not recognize, as only their skeletons remained. The saddest sight of all was all the claws from the hermit crabs that had died.

We heard scurrying, and discovered that the only creatures to survive were the rats and mice, who we believe, were bred for snake food as well as for pets. We also located one very cute and hungry hamster, who Linda took home.



We found one large dead male rat, but were not able to catch any live, adult rats that day. However, there was a small group of juveniles whom we caught and planned to bring to a pet store for fostering. These rats were eating some solids, but were very small. Squeaks were heard under a fridge, which turned out to be a rat's nest that we could not reach. Kelly and I drove the rescued rats to NJ Pets, where they were fostered with other rats. NJ Pets also provided care for one little rat with poor

skin. We kept one small hooded rat who needed hand feeding, and he has prospered.

We found a tarantula on a shelf, as well as a bin of hissing cockroaches. The roaches flew overnight mail to Pat Storm, for a much happier life. Sadly, none of the lizards that Linda took home survived. However, the cages she took would prove helpful for hedgehog rescues in the weeks that followed.

I returned again a week later to pick up some more lizards, which had been found during the week. This time I did not manage to catch any rats, but I brought home three sticky-toed geckos, a tiny lizard of unknown origin, and a tree frog. The tree frog was just hanging onto a pipe, and he looked horrible. A few days of crickets perked him right up though! I kept these animals for a month and then they were adopted by a friend who has experience with reptiles.

About a week after this last visit, I received a phone call from Geri letting me know that the building manager had hired people to clean out the former reptile warehouse. I was in Massachusetts at the time, but arranged to stop by on the way back to my home in NJ to see if any other animals could be rescued. By now the only animals left were rats and mice, and it was hard work to catch as many of them as possible. In the end, following several bites, one of which broke the skin, we managed to gather up five litters of baby rats and three nursing mothers. Guess where my big new sterilite went?

These rats stayed with me a week until they were re-homed at NJ Pets, where the small animal department graciously agreed to house mom and babies. Over 30 rat babies were too much for me to handle! A very mangy looking albino rat also came home with me. I kept "her" separated from my

continued on page 12

other animals and hand fed her, due to possible contamination risks. A drop of revolution and good feeding soon led to a happy healthy rat.

In the end, we saved maybe 50 animals, out of hundreds. Hundreds died, and it appeared that only those who were "valuable" to the dealer were taken. Several years ago, Bronx Reptiles had several lawsuits filed against them for their improper care and shipping of animals, but they were still in operation. Sadly, a large bird wholesaler is still in operation in the same space. His animals look "o.k." but it still gives me the shivers to think of how quickly it could go wrong. This man did not like us, because we took a couple of bags of shavings he claimed were his to use with the rescues. Geri continues to monitor him.

Having seen this horror, which was worse than any other rescue operation I have seen, I can only ask people to please make sure you know who you are buying animals from and who supplies them. You can look companies up on the net, and the court cases will show up. People at NJ pets were not even aware that Bronx Reptiles had closed. Petco in Union Square, Manhattan, used to buy from Bronx Reptiles. This is the Petco I adopted three cats though a rescue from, who donates food and time, but still did not know what kind of place they had been dealing with. The two rats I kept are prospering. The



albino we thought was a boy turned out to be a girl and we had to neuter our male Ratsui, very quickly. In a month he went from not valuable enough to bother caring about, to an animal who merited an expensive surgery.

Thank you again to Geri for caring enough to act. Thanks to Kelly, Sean, Linda, and Jason for their hard work, and to everyone who provided support while this was going on.

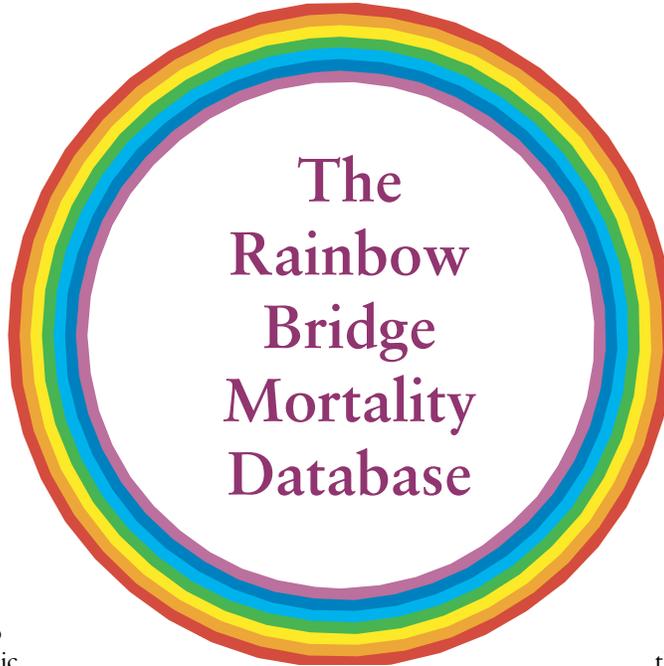


Long Live the Hedgehogs!

by *Donnasue Graesser*
North Windham, Connecticut

Our pets, hedgehogs and others, bring us tremendous joy. However, one of the truly heartbreaking aspects having pets in our lives is that, inevitably, we outlive them. Hedgehog mortality is a sad, but necessary, subject to address. It is through the study of hedgehog deaths that we have been able to better educate the veterinary community in regards to what types diseases are significantly affecting our hedgehogs. As we become more familiar with common causes of hedgehog death, vets will have better information to diagnose hedgehog illness in the clinic. In addition, statistical studies on hedgehog illness and death enable us to prioritize and focus our limited health-related research resources (time and money). No one likes to discuss death, but it is necessary to help improve the quality of *life* for our hedgehogs.

To gain more comprehensive knowledge in the area of hedgehog mortality, we have been collecting data about hedgehogs that have crossed over the Rainbow Bridge for several years. In general, we have been asking questions about how old the hedgehogs lived to be, what diseases they died from, and more specific information in order to establish trends, such as color, gender, feeding habits, breeding histories, and some medical treatments. The information has been, and continues to be, collected *mostly* from hedgehog owners on the Internet e-mail lists. We also have contributions from owners who have been referred to the study, as well as cases that have been reported by various veterinary clinics. Of course, no survey is perfect, and we do not control for some of the variable factors that may affect a hedgehog's health such as feeding, past illnesses, quality of medical attention, etc.



We try to include as many hedgehogs as possible in the study, from across North America and around the world. A few of the cases have been reported from other continents, but the hedgehogs are all African Pygmy hedgehogs, not European hedgehogs. Rather than overwhelm the readers with masses of information, I have chosen to include one tidbit of data analysis to be reported in each issue of the HWS newsletter. In this newsletter, I will discuss lifespan data.

Hedgehog Lifespan

Often times a new hedgehog owner will post the "lifespan" question to the e-mail lists: "How long do hedgehogs live?" There are two approaches to answering this question. The first approach is to refer to the published literature. One of the first books about pet hedgehogs reports that the average age of a pet hedgehog is 8-10 years old. This information is clearly out-dated and not accurate for a pet hedgehog in North America today. Another article in the veterinary literature states that they *can* live up to 8 years of age, which is true; but, it is

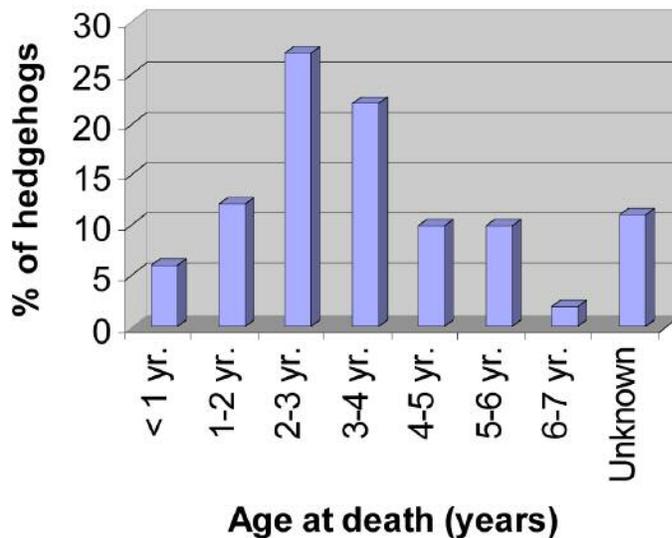
certainly not the norm. The other approach to answering this question is the anecdotal approach. Many owners chime in with answers such as, "My hedgehog lived to be 2 years old." ...or 4 years old...or 6 years old...or 7 years old... and so on. These replies can be confusing, and are not very informative. It was this contradiction between the published statistics and the anecdotal information that prompted me to focus a research investigation on the lifespan of hedgehogs.

We first reported mortality data in the summer of 2000. At that point in time, the average lifespan of the hedgehogs reported to this study was approximately 22 months. Two years later, that figure jumped to 41 months. This was quite a significant increase! One can optimistically speculate that this increased longevity was due to improved husbandry practices and education. To this day, we have observed no significant correlation between the average life span and characteristics such as gender, color, or geographic region.

The graph below illustrates the lifespan data from the most recent 100 cases submitted to the mortality database. Almost half the hedgehogs (49%) lived between two and four years of age. Only 2% lived above the age of six. The age at death was unknown for 11% of the hedgehogs. For the most part, these "unknown age" hedgehogs were rescues. The average lifespan of these most recent entries to the database is 39.5 months. That is not statistically different from the 41 month average calculated three years ago. Will we see improvements in longevity as the years go by and we gain further experience and knowledge in hedgehog nutrition and health care? We hope! We'd all hope to celebrate more birthdays with our beloved hedgehogs!

continued on page 14

Hedgehog Lifespan



How can You get involved?

Does this research sound interesting and worthwhile to you? As always, the input of owners is not only enormously appreciated, it is *essential* to continuing this project. Every hedgehog owner is encouraged to contribute, and every contribution is crucial.

The first way to help is with factual input. I know how difficult it is to lose a dear pet and friend, but we can make more sense of each death by gaining some productive knowledge from that death. Any hedgehog

death can be reported to the Rainbow Bridge Mortality Database. To add information to the data-base, just send an e-mail to me at donnasue.graesser@aya.yale.edu. I will follow up by sending you a list of questions to answer about the hedgehog. The information you give *does not* need to be complete or exact. With experience, we have learned to tease out every bit of useful information, even from cases with a lot of “mystery” background.

A second way to help is to get your veterinarian involved in reporting hedgehog cases to the survey, especially if he/she sees a

lot of hedgehogs in the practice. If you think your veterinarian might be willing to participate, please contact me, or have your vet contact me. I have a little flyer/info sheet that is distributed to collaborating veterinarians.

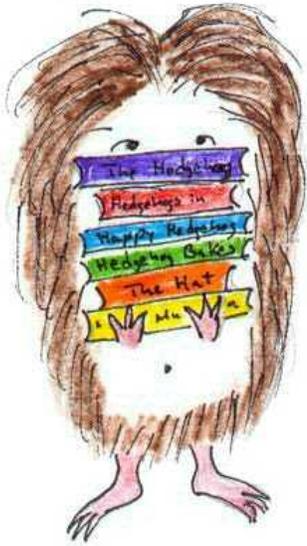
Another important contribution is intellectual input. Do you have a question about hedgehog health that you have been curious about? Do you suspect some trend in hedgehog health? For example, one owner wanted to know if there was any correlation between ivermectin usage and specific health problems that she had seen in her pets. We added some questions about ivermectin to the survey that has now gone out to hundreds of hedgehog-owners, and now can begin to gain some insight into this question, other than anecdotal evidence. So, if you have any ideas, suggestions, or just health questions that you are curious about, contact me and you can help to design new survey questions to address these queries.

Finally, I cannot even begin to express my appreciation for all the owners, veterinarians, breeders, and collaborators who have contributed so much factual information and intellectual effort to the construction of this data-base. I would also like to add a final word of respect and affection for all the magnificent hedgehogs who blessed our lives and are now looking down at us from over the Rainbow Bridge, knowing that their deaths have in a small way contributed to the betterment of hedgehog healthcare for generations to come. I hope to continue this work in their memory.

Nell and Willa achieve detente in a tube

Coming Next Issue: *Hedgehog Cohabitation*





The Literary Hedgehog

by Naomi Wikane, Schoharie, New York

Many of us have an animal communicator work with our hedgies and other companions. Our own Dawn Wrobel is now doing this wonderful work and she studied under Carol Schultz who is the one I contact. Carol studied under Penelope Smith, who is the author of Animal Talk, the book I want to share with you. Penelope Smith has been a pioneer in the field of interspecies telepathic communication for nearly thirty years.

I quote from her introduction.

Rather than thinking of animals and people as "them" and "us," I see all of Earth's life forms including plants, rocks, water, air, and all we experience around us, as a symbiotic whole. We are working in concert, unfolding a cycle that we have been developing over the millennia – a continual play to act in, observe, and unravel toward more enjoyment of life and exchange with one another... Throughout all ages there have been many people who have revered and treated their fellow animals as spiritual brothers and sisters. Communion and communication with other species is not a new idea. This thread can be found woven through the world's religious traditions and as a basic fact of life in tribal communities of many lands.

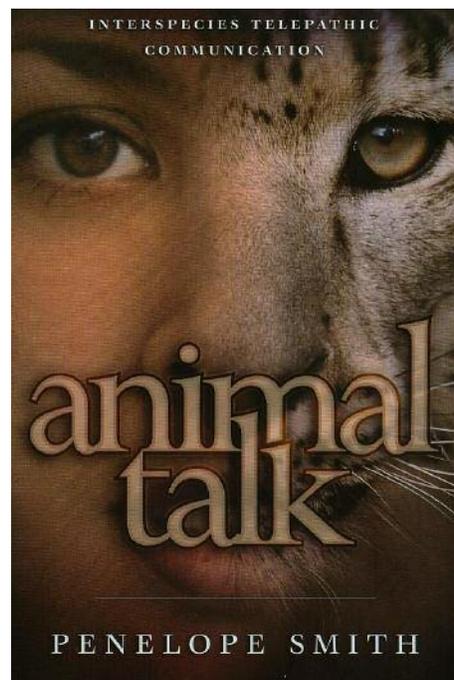
The word telepathy can be broken down to tele- refers to distance and -pathy refers to feeling. So, telepathic communication involves the ability to feel another across a distance. It's the experience of receiving images, feelings, thoughts and concepts from individuals of other species. It can occur between beings across many miles and through walls and other barriers.

Penelope Smith, in this very readable and enjoyable book, explains how to communicate with animals, how they show they understand, and how to work with physical needs and behavior problems. She tells many real stories about animals she has worked with.

It will enhance your relationship with your hedgies and other animal companions to read this book.



Animal Talk by Penelope Smith, Beyond Words Pub., Inc, 1999, paperback \$14.95 can be purchased at a bookstore or on the internet from Amazon.com or Barnes&Noble.com. You can also purchase her audio and video tapes from Pegasus Publications, PO Box 1060, Pont Reyes Station, CA 94956-1060.



Submissions for the Newsletter Welcomed!

A question for the pogs?
Favorite Rescue Story?
Favorite Photo(s)?
Letter to the Editor?

Please send it/them to us either electronically at newsletter@hedgehogwelfare.org

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