



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 #25, NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006

The Hedgehog Welfare Society
PO Box 242
Chaplin CT 06235
www.hedgehogwelfare.org

HWS Committees/Contacts

Advocacy – Pet-store/USDA Liasons
Jennifer Plombon, Stephanie Hyne
advohws@aol.com

Rescue Coordination
Sheila Dempsey, Julie Meyers-Rocco
rescue@hedgehogwelfare.org

Health Research and Education
Gioia Kerlin, Julie Hintz
health@hedgehogwelfare.org

Rescue Care Packages
Jennifer Plombon advohws@aol.com

Quills and Comfort
Judie Peters
judie@quillsandcomfort.com
Carol Fish Kregear
carol@quillsandcomfort.com

HWS Administration

Public Relations
Cindy DeLaRosa
cinrosa@aol.com
Tonya Thomas
animals4u@jellico.net

HWS Donations and Store Items
Donnasue Graesser
donnasue.graesser@aya.yale.edu

Website Additions/Deletions/Corrections
Janelle Zorko
advohws@aol.com

Newsletter
Kathleen Knudsen
bollask2@aol.com

Finance
Donnasue Graesser
donnasue.graesser@aya.yale.edu

Membership
Kerri LeMotte
onceuponabluemoon@hotmail.com

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



ARTWORK BY JUDIE PETERS

FROM THE HEDGEHOG WELFARE SOCIETY

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A HEDGIE CHRISTMAS EVE

Twass the night before Christmas, and all through the home
 The house was silent, while hedgies did roam.
 The momz and the dadz in their beds did sleep
 While hedgies, down the hall, did silently creep.
 As they gathered together, ready for play
 They wanted to help Santa on this special day.
 All had ideas and they came up with a plan
 They would help Santa any way that they can.

The call went out by hedgie e-mail.
 Each pog wanted to help Santa, without fail.
 Molly Girls, Manly Hedgeboyz and Quilled Gentlemen too,
 Divided the work, they knew what to do.
 They had to work fast, without delay
 For Santa would leave soon in his magical sleigh.

The Molly Girls giggled and laughed with glee
 As they danced 'round decorating the green Christmas tree.
 The ornaments, tinsel and twinkling lights
 All had to be in place this night of all nights.
 The girls hung stockings and swept the hearth clean,
 Then dressed the chimney in ivy of green.
 In Molly Girl style, each one did her part
 To get the house ready in holiday art.

The Quilled Gentlemen had important work too,
 They hung the mistletoe with hedgie poo glue.
 Then wrapped gifts in paper and ribbons of red
 For good little hedgies asleep in their bed.
 With the dirty work done, they washed clean their paws
 They wanted to impress old Santa Claus.
 So they cleaned their quills and brushed their top hats
 Got dressed in their finest, including white spats.

The Hedgeboyz came in choppers and trucks
 To load all the gifts in large hedgie trunks.
 With everything loaded and with lists in their hand
 They delivered the gifts all through hedgie-land.
 Visiting each pigloo and each sleepy sack
 They left presents for pogs, each pulled from a pack.
 With the job all done, each Hedgeboy returns
 To join the party and eat crickies and worms.

Eating and singing were part of the fun,
 Santa would come soon, the clock struck one.
 The hedgies were dancing when the clock struck two,
 A loud noise was heard by the chimney flue.
 The hedgies ran and hid in delight
 As they waited for Santa to arrive that night.
 Santa appeared and arrived in a heap,
 Looking around, his work was complete.

By the fireplace Santa found a note and a plate
 Filled with chickie sticks, salmon fruit and more that he ate.
 He sat in a soft chair, behind a big sled,
 To read the note. Here is what it said.
 "Dear Santa Claus, on this special day
 we did your work so you can play.
 Take time to rest before you go,
 Merry Christmas, Santa! Ho-Ho-Ho."

Santa looked up and to his delight
 He saw the hedgies, hiding that night.
 "My dears," he said, with a tear in his eye.
 "The true spirit of Christmas did not pass you by.
 You thought of others instead of yourself.
 That is the makings of a true elf."
 He had presents for all and mealworms too.
 "Thank you, my elves, in all that you do."
 Up the chimney and back to his sleigh.
 "May the feeling of Christmas bless you every day!"



ARTWORK BY JUDIE PETERS

Animal Law

*Kristen Zorbini,
Madison, Wisconsin*

What is animal law? Even those in the legal field might look puzzled if asked this question. That’s not because animal law is some dark corner of the law that never sees the light of day, however. Animal law is everywhere!

Animal law issues can arise in the insurance industry. Many home insurance companies will not insure your home if you own a “dangerous” breed of dog? (Wisconsin has currently introduce legislation that would make this practice illegal)

Animal law issues arise in family law. As couples wait longer to have children, they often have animals who become as important as children. Upon divorce, courts now must look at custody and visitation for animals.

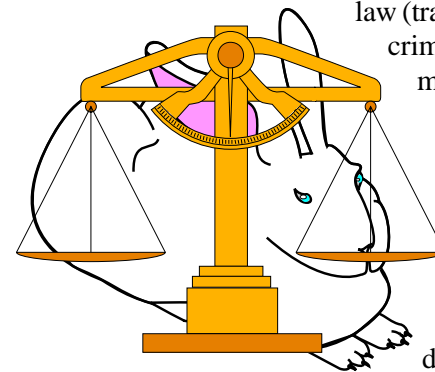
Animal law comes up in employment law. When suing an employer for being fired unfairly part of the process is figuring out how much you had to pay to, for example, move your household across the country. Can you include \$1000 to se-date and transport three cats from Wisconsin to Arizona? (this is from a real case)

Animal law is obviously involved in torts, including personal injury, such as injury resulting from dog bites. Less widely known are the cases involving infliction of emotional distress by harming an animal in the owner’s presence. This



is a developing area to bring suit.

Animal law is also involved in agricultural law (farm animals), tribal law (hunting traditional animals), international law (transportation of animals), criminal law (cruelty to animals), and many others.



So, no matter where you look, there could be an animal law issue staring you right in the face. Animal law is relevant and serious, and it has a lot to do with people, too. 🐾

“Rescue Me”

Calendars are here!



PHOTO: SHEILA DEMPSEY

Herbie Kerlin suggests you get your calendar before they’re gone.

The 2007 Hedgehog Welfare Society Calendar, “Rescue Me” will be on sale through Ruby’s Shop on the internet at www.hedgehogwelfare.org in the month of November. It will be the same price as last year, \$20, and features great photos of adorable rescued hedgehogs and a brief story about each. Plan on getting yours for home or office (why not both!?). 🐾



This image is hosted on kizfun.net

Maybe sending off a last-minute note to Santa?

Emma Rose's Foot Problems

Laure Dunklee

Background

Emma Rose is a year-old female hedgehog. She has multiple health problems, including:

- * An eye that was injured by a sibling's quill when she was about two-months' old and which, since that time, has had repeat infections/ulcers;

- * Neurological problems, possibly caused by a brain infection following the initial eye injury, that result in an intention tremor and very uneven gait;

- * Confirmed additional neurological problems related to Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome, as one of her sibling's had WHS confirmed by necropsy;

- * And chronic "bloody feet", resulting from her habit of sucking on her feet while she sleeps (cute to look at, but this means she actually removes the top layers of skin on her feet!).

The Foot Problem

I first noticed Emma's foot problem in December 2005, after she'd been with me for about a month and a half. She lives in a habitat without a wheel (she's too unsteady on her feet for a wheel and falls out of one when given the chance), but like all hedgehogs, Emma loves to run, so I've set-up a long habitat for her - this means that she can run to her heart's desire, which she does, most every night, without fear of injury.

I use cloth liners in Emma's habitat, but I then cover them with paper towels, because Emma, like many hedgies, goes to the bathroom on the run and then walks through her mess. The paper towels allow for an easier cage cleaning routine.

Anyway, one morning, when I looked into her habitat, I noticed that there was what looked like blood splatter, all over the paper towels, along the path that Emma usually runs.



There were no large pools of blood, just lots and lots of tiny dots of what appeared to be dried blood. I immediately pulled the little one out for an examination and saw that her two hind feet were, in fact, quite raw and bloody. The raw spots were around the base of her toes, where they connect with the foot proper, and also in some of the creases of her feet.

I promptly cleaned Emma's feet using chlorhexiderm, and then applied a schmear of Silvadene crème to the affected areas. And then I called the vet.

Treatments

There were several issues that needed to be addressed in caring for Emma's feet while they healed:

1. Emma would likely chew on her feet during the healing process, so any topical medication needed to be non-toxic.

2. Emma needed to maintain as much freedom of movement as possible, since she has difficulty moving around without the additional foot problems.

3. Emma's feet needed to be covered so that, as she ran, she would not continue to traipse through her waste and then develop an infection from the bacteria.

We immediately started Emma on oral antibiotics, in case she'd already contracted an infection from the open wounds. And then we started looking at how we could cover her feet while they healed.

Most of the options that we tried involved twice-daily cleanings of Emma's feet, followed by an application of an antibiotic crème, followed by an application of sterile pads, then gauze bandages, followed by a "top" bandage that'd keep everything in place.



(Continues on page 5...)

EMMA ROSE...

(...Continued from page 4)

While these procedures seemed to be the textbook things to do, they simply didn't work with Emma's lifestyle. The foot cleaning was fine (though she didn't much care for it), and the application of the antibiotic crème went well, too, although I had to hold onto each foot until the crème dried, else she'd roll into a ball and wipe off the medicine in her belly fur. But the real challenge came with the bandages - not only was it pretty much impossible for me to bandage her feet on my own (really, four hands were needed for the process), but we also ran into problems with keeping the bandages on her feet. If we wrapped her feet and legs up to the hock, which kept the bandage in place, then Emma couldn't walk. And if we made the bandage shorter, then it would fall off, or she'd pull it off, and if we wrapped the bandage a little bit tighter, to keep it in place, we then ran into the issue of not being able to tell when we went from "okay tight" to "far too tight and cutting off circulation."

The Solution

Since last December, my vet, her staff, and I have been working to find a solution to Emma's foot problems. Eventually her feet heal and all is well for a couple of weeks, but then one morning I wake and see the telltale blood spatter throughout her habitat and I know that we're in for another week or two of repeat trips to the veterinary office, where we all conspire to develop a workable bandage, and I know that my mornings and evenings will be spent cleaning her feet, applying crème, hoping that I can hold Emma still for long enough for it to dry, and then attempting to get bandages in place, so she can run and frolic like any other hedgehog.

However, during our last round with Emma's bloody feet, a solution seems to have been found! One of the office staff asked why we couldn't use some of the newly-available liquid-bandage products currently sold at drug stores. After some research, we decided that this might be a good option to explore, and so I trotted off to the nearest corner drug store.



I purchased a product called "New Skin," which is a liquid bandage product. New Skin comes in a liquid formula that is applied with a small brush, like fingernail polish, and it is also available as a pump spray. I opted for the former, being concerned about overspray issues.

After some trial and error, we managed to develop a good routine for caring for Emma's feet while they recover. When I discover bloody feet in the morning, I first clean the affected skin with warm water, followed by cleaning with a q-tip that's been dipped in Chlorhexiderm to make sure that any biological contaminants have been neutralized. After that, I apply Silivadene crème to the raw and bloody areas and allow that to dry. Emma's then tucked in for the day, as I know that she'll sleep for several hours and the elapsed time will allow the crème to work its magic.

Then, in the evening, prior to Emma getting-up for her food and exploration time, I will again clean her feet with the warm water and the Chlorhexiderm. Once her feet are clean and dry, I apply a thin brushing of the New Skin liquid bandage to her affected feet. The solution takes a few minutes to dry and then I apply a second layer, to make sure that the wounds are sufficiently sealed over, which will keep out the bacteria and will allow for her skin to heal.

The next morning, I clean Emma's feet with the warm water and Chlorhexiderm, which removes a small amount of the New Skin, but most of it remains in place. Any skin that is newly uncovered is coated with Silvadene for the day. In the evening, Emma's feet are cleaned and more of the liquid bandage is applied.

This care routine is kept up for about a week; I never remove the New Skin, allowing it to wear off on its own, while Emma's skin heals underneath. So far it works well and Emma's not developed any infections since we've started employing the new treatment.



JAW TUMOR STUDY IN HEDGEHOGS – SURVEY

The hedgehog community has noted a large number of jaw tumors among our pet hedgehogs. With the help of grant funds and the generosity of our donors we hope to begin to understand the causes of this disease. If you have lost a hedgehog to jaw tumors, or if you have a hedgehog currently living with tumors, please take a moment to fill out the questionnaire below.

This research may help us determine if jaw tumors are dietary, hereditary, viral, hygienic or caused by some other factor. Your input is valuable! This is an ongoing study and information from the past as well as into the future will add to our understanding. Pathology reports and necropsies may also help us to understand this disease better. Thank you for your help!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you provide may help us to identify the cause of so many jaw tumors among our pet hedgehogs. Feel free to add extra pages or space in the survey if you need it. If a necropsy and/or pathology were done, please submit a copy to: Vicki McLean, 475 Lori Ave. SE, Salem, OR 97302 OR via scanned .pdf file to Vicki@IndigoMedicalMassage.com.



1. What are your name, address and e-mail?

2. What is your hedgehog's:

a. sex? _____

b. weight throughout most of his/her life? _____

c. Hedgehog Registry number, if any? _____

3. At what age was the jaw tumor noted? Years _____ Months _____

4. If your hedgehog has already passed away, how old was s/he when s/he died? Years _____ Months _____

5. Was your hedgehog euthanized? _____

6. If so, what prompted the choice to euthanize (pressure on the eye, evident pain, inability to eat, etc)? _____

Note If your hedgehog is still living at the time you are filling out this survey, please update the information in questions #4-6 when s/he passes away. (Continues on page 7)

JAW TUMOR STUDY IN HEDGEHOGS – SURVEY

(Continued from page 6)

7. Was a necropsy done or pathology report prepared for your hedgehog? If so, what was the general diagnosis of the report? Please send copies to the address above.

To your knowledge:

8.. Has your hedgehog ever had tumors in other organs? _____ If so, where? _____

9. Was your hedgehog:

a. Rescued? _____

b. Purchased from a pet store? _____

c. Obtained from a breeder? _____ If so, please list the breeding facility. _____

d. Other: _____

10. Does/did the hedgehog have relatives with a diagnosis of tumor (e.g. uterine tumors)? _____

a. If so, where were the tumors located on the body? _____

b. What was the relationship between the current hedgehog and the other hedgehogs with tumors? _____

c. What was the proximity of the cages (for the majority of their lives) among the hedgehogs that have had tumors, if any? For example, were they next to each other, or were they across the room?

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JAW TUMOR STUDY IN HEDGEHOGS – SURVEY

(Continued from page 7)

11. Has your hedgehog had other illnesses in addition to the jaw tumor? _____ If so, what? _____

12. Has your hedgehog ever received drugs? _____ If so, what? _____

13. What is/was the daily diet of your hedgehog generally? Specify types of dry food, types of soft food and percentage of hard to soft food. _____

14. Does/did your hedgehog(s) get oral cleanings? _____ If so, how frequently? _____

15. Do you have more than one hedgehog living or who have died? _____ If yes, please complete as much information as possible in the following table.

Hedgehog's Name _____

Sex _____ If deceased, age at death _____ Year of death _____

Jaw Tumors? _____

Other tumors ? _____

Location of tumors _____

Pathology of tumor if available _____

Please provide any additional information you think may be relevant to the incidence of jaw cancer in your hedgehog?

Massage and the Wobbly Hedgehog

Vicki McLean
Salem, Oregon

Hedgehogs are generally really poor massage clients. The best you can hope for is a nice foot rub during a sound sleep. But when illness strikes, massage is a great tool for benefiting your pet and minimizing the stress that goes with illness.

One of the major benefits of even the most straightforward massage is a reduction of activity in the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system is also known as the “fight or flight” response. It is the part of your system that revs you up and prepares you and other mammals for action. While “Prickles” hasn’t spent a lot of time worrying about tomorrow’s test or the fight last night with his mate, illness does put stress on his physical being.

When damage occurs in the central nervous system (CNS) or in the peripheral nervous system (PNS) as it does with Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome (WHS), the possibilities for using massage increase dramatically. The source of the damage is immaterial. Strokes or tumors can create a classic “cog-wheel rigidity” that is very similar to rigidity of the muscles that occur with WHS. Among the common muscular problems that progress as the demyelination of the nerves and vacuolization of the motor cortex occur are as follows:

Spasticity: When spasticity progresses, not only is it likely to cause discomfort in and of itself, the hedgehog compensates so that muscles become imbalanced and proprioception is impaired. Proprioceptors are receptors in and around the joints, within skeletal muscle and between tendons and muscles that supply awareness of where the body is in space.



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Annabelle relaxing in her caregiver’s hands. Annabelle was afflicted with astrocytoma, an aggressive brain cancer that ultimately occupied a huge portion of her brain before passing.



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Libby has the typical gait of a hedgehog with compensating movements in her legs and body. Caregivers Laura and Chelle Ledet.

Tremors: Intention tremors occur when the hedgehog tries to move. The tremors can be very small or large rhythmical movements. The result of all this is that the hedgehog initially develops inefficient movement patterns and the classic “dragging of the foot” that arises from weakness and spasticity in one of his hind legs. This alone can fatigue your pet.

Contractures: Contracture formation is very common among our WHS pets. When muscles become weak from muscle imbalances and spasticity, the result is compensating body mechanics. A propped up knee here and an arched back there help the hedgehog balance in his disabled state, but contractures arise from the resulting unopposed antagonist muscles.

Every structure on an animal has a muscle that serves as an agonist and also a muscle that serves as an antagonist. For example, the extensor muscles on the top side of the forearm serve as the agonist to extend the hand while the flexor muscles on the inside of the forearm serve as the antagonist for that movement. When a muscle serving as an agonist does not function properly due to weakness, the result is that the antagonist contracts. This sets in motion what is called a muscle/spasm/pain cycle that will not allow the contracted muscle to release.

The most common place for contractures to occur on our hedgehogs is in their legs and in the intrinsic muscles of the spine (the very fine muscles that manipulate the bodies and spinal processes of the vertebrae). The result may be severe scoliosis of the spine, wee ears pulled down the side of the head or stiff, extended legs. In addition, the orbicularis muscle (the one that pulls the hedgehog into a drawstring purse)

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MASSAGE...

(...Continued from page 9)

seems to develop portions that contract pretty dramatically.

These common muscular reactions to nervous system deterioration can cause a great deal of discomfort for your pet and can be minimized with careful, thorough massage on a regular basis.

What massage can I do for my hedgehog?

Looking at the list of muscular problems that result when your hedgehog's nervous system does not function well, it is no wonder that massage is in order. The abnormal activity in the muscles can cause damage within the muscles themselves and in the surrounding connective tissue (fascia). Adhesions, scar tissue and other abnormalities can result. Massage techniques can release contractures, increase flexibility, smooth out adhesions, minimize scarring, reduce adrenaline and give your pet a few hours of rest from the relentless spasm and contracting. A number of techniques can be used to aid your hedgehog depending what you want to accomplish. As your hedgehog's body is ravaged by the muscular response to the WHS, more and more myofascial damage occurs.

The body is held together by various types of connective tissue. The most common connective tissue in the body is fascia. It behaves like a knit sweater and holds organs, muscles and other structures in place. Like a knit sweater, if you pull on the upper left shoulder, the lower right hemline will pull the same direction. A knot or adhesion in the fascia or muscle will pull the body out of alignment resulting in pain and decreased flexibility. Fascia, when warmed, turns nearly liquid. This process is called thixotropy. Moving too quickly when beginning your massage can cause a tightening response in the muscles. To avoid this, start with slow and soft movements against the tissue. This will cause thixotropy and establish a good physical environment for the rest of your routine.

"Effleurage" is the best stroke to start your pet's massage to the extent you can deal with quills. Effleurage is a slow, light movement. Move your fingers lightly across tissue on the arms and legs. When approaching the abdomen, be sure to use a light, clockwise movement. The colon moves waste products clockwise and following its lead will help elimination. Your first five minutes should be spent relaxing and softening the myofascial tissue.

"Petrissage" is the next stroke in your arsenal and light petrissage can be used to loosen the tissue in the back underneath the quills. Petrissage is a kneading movement. For the initial approach to the back, it is important to use light touch. Hold your hedgehog in your left hand face up (if you are right handed). Place your right hand on the upper back so that your fingers are touching the space between fur and the quill line on your hedgehog's left side. The thumb should be

touching the space between fur and quills on the right. Gently knead the hedgehog's back, slowly warming the tissue. Move your petrissage stroke from behind the ears slowly kneading down the hedgehog's back to the tail.



PHOTO: VICKI MCLEAN

Carol Kregear is administering pincer palpation to Bentley to help loosen tightened intrinsic muscles in the spine.

"Pincer Palpation" can be used on the spine. As you deepen the work on your pet's back, slowly move your fingers in a manner to provide very slight movement to the spine. Intrinsic muscles to the spine tighten and the spine becomes crooked. By offsetting your thumb slightly from the pressure of your fingers, you can effect some slight movement of the vertebrae. Care should be taken not to overdo this movement. A minimal movement is all you are seeking.

"Passive Stretch" can be used on stiff legs. After the fascia and tissue is warmed, slowly extend the legs. You may need to assist the stretch of the knee since it may be retracted into the abdominal cavity. Slowly move your fingers behind

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PHOTO: VICKI MCLEAN

Isabelle is receiving petrissage from Carol Kregear.

MASSAGE...

(...Continued from page 10)

the knee and delicately extend the leg until it reaches nearly full length. Stretch each stiff leg between 6 and 12 times.



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Passive stretch is excellent for contracted limb muscles. Carol Kregear demonstrates this technique on Bentley, caregivers Laura and Chelle Ledet.

Use your left hand to “strip” the muscles on the affected leg. Skeletal muscles always cross joints. If they didn’t, they wouldn’t be able to move the joint. To strip the muscle, slowly move your finger up the length of the muscle starting below the ankle joint, for example, and extending across the knee joint.

You can also use “friction” on the insertion or origin of the muscle. Friction involves a slight movement back and forth over the insertion or origination. The origination or insertion point of the muscle will be on either side of joints. Muscles will often relax when friction or pressure is put on both the origination or insertion point of a muscle.

Friction can also be used on contractures. A contracture can be identified by the distortion of the hedgehog’s body position. Contractures seem to be prevalent in the orbicularis muscle. Use your thumb and forefingers on either side of the orbicularis muscle. Squeeze the muscle very lightly between your fingers and thumb, moving slowly around the orbicularis muscle. Where there are contractures, you will feel a lump in the muscle. Use light friction on the contracture until it relaxes. As it relaxes, the size and firmness of the lump will be reduced. The lump you feel may be adhesions and scar tissue rather than a contracture; however, your pet’s body will respond to friction regardless of the cause of the “lump.”

Be patient with yourself while trying to feel muscles and structures in your hedgehog’s body. Anyone beginning to work in bodywork will tell you that the first attempt to find

adhesions, congestion and scar tissue in a human body feels overwhelming at the outset. A hedgehog’s body is even harder to decipher due to her size. Practice is the solution to the problem.

Cautions

While your hedgehog is not particularly fragile, there are a few things you will need to keep in mind as you work with her. First, diseases that include demyelination of nerves often result in fatigue for the animal suffering from the disease. It is possible to overwork your hedgehog. She is already fatigued from trying to cope with her frustrating disabilities, tremors and spastic muscular movements. Bear this in mind when you choose the length of your session. If she seems overly fatigued after your session, try a lighter, slower and shorter session.



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Michelle Ledet gives Libby a massage in warm bath water. Water can help loosen muscles and reduce swelling.

The structure of the spine makes it particularly susceptible to careless injury. Each vertebra has a sturdy body through which the spinal column travels. The strength of the body protects the very sensitive spinal cord. In order for the spine to articulate in all the directions it needs to move and to provide support for the complex nervous system, the spine is delicate and intricate. Each vertebra is composed of the body and two transverse processes extending from either side of the body. The afferent (sensory) and efferent (motor) nerves leave/enter the spinal column. Spinous processes project from the back side of the vertebra’s body. Take care not to put excessive pressure against the processes while doing petrissage on the back. Making sure not to collect too little tissue between your thumb and fingers helps to guard against any mishap. Keeping your fingers and thumb on the line between your hedgehog’s quills and her fur will also help to ensure you won’t put too much pressure on the processes of the spine.

(Continues on page 12...)

MASSAGE...

(...Continued from page 11)



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Isabelle loves receiving petrissage from Carol Kregear to relax and soften her muscles. Caregivers Laura and Chelle Ledet.

It is also important not to put too much torque on the spine when mobilizing the intrinsic muscles.

Avoid massaging your hedgehog on tissue that has been damaged. When your hedgehog loses her balance, she is likely to skin her knees, claw her axilla while attempting to move from place to place or cause some other tissue damage. Massaging on these damaged areas will further damage the tissue and hurt your hedgehog. Wait until these areas are thoroughly healed before putting additional stress on the tissue from massage.

Summary

Hedgehogs respond favorably to massage as they start to lose their mobility and their ability to roll into a ball. If you are mindful of sensitive structures, damaged tissue and overworking your hedgehog, she will likely show you by her relaxed demeanor after the massage that she appreciates your



PHOTO: VICKI McLEAN

Libby, cared for by Laura and Chelle Ledet, has finished her exhausting massage session.

efforts. Massage does reduce stress, interrupt contractures, organize damaged muscle tissue and allow your hedgehog some pain free hours. It is also likely that the massage slows the impact of the muscle damage and allows him to live his life at a higher quality of life.

Enjoy this special time with your hedgehog. At the very least it allows you and your hedgehog quality time together. ■



PHOTO: KATHLEEN HJØRDIS KNUDSEN

Aphrodite and Odin are settled in for a wonderful winter story.

Vicki McLean, MBA, LMT
Indigo Medical Massage

Vicki McLean is a Licensed Massage Therapist practicing in Salem, Oregon. She is the sole proprietor of Indigo Medical Massage. Vicki specializes in accident and injury recovery working with both acute and chronic soft tissue injuries.

If you have questions, you may contact her at
Vicki@IndigoMedicalMassage.com.

Her website is www.IndigoMedicalMassage.com.

The reason for doing what we do...

(Editor's Note: After reading the following tribute to a beloved little rescue, I contacted Sondra and asked her permission to reprint this in our holiday newsletter. You might question the timing of this... Having received dozens of phone calls asking for hedgehogs in the days leading up to Christmas, I believe it is the perfect time to remind everyone of the responsibilities that come with bringing an animal into your home – yes, even the impulse animals.

Sondra and Kimberly, the HWS extends its sincere sympathy to you as you mourn this loss. At the same time, we extend our sincere gratitude for the glimpse of heaven you provided Splinter as he packed his bags and prepared for his journey across the Bridge.

I will also take this opportunity to thank you each and every one of you for your efforts, both large and small, on behalf of the animals – every little bit does help to make a difference.)

I am so sad to introduce Splinter and say goodbye to him all in the same post.

I got a call from a woman Wednesday afternoon saying her son had a hedgehog, he was three, he had a “slight injury,” and they didn’t have the money to give him proper care. She had called all over and no one would help – she didn’t remember where she got my name.

Of course we went and got him. The family was very nice – dad works during the day, mom at night, four kids with three under five years old. Splinter belonged to an 8 or 9 year old boy as the father explained – his son did all the caring for the hedgehog, made sure he cleaned the cage once a week and fed him.

Splinter lived in a 10 gallon tank with no wheel or any food bowl I could see, he had a scrap of an old t-shirt he was rolled up in. They were amazed when I scooped him up, the little boy said “Doesn’t he hurt you?” I said nope and snuggled him. Of course he stayed in a ball.

The father said his son noticed a bump on him when he took him out to clean his cage, and it had gotten bigger since he first noticed it. He explained they didn’t have the money to get medical care, he didn’t want to just have him “put down” or leave him sit there till he died. At that point I was happy it wasn’t worse, when I heard “slight injury” from the mother I was very worried.

We brought Splinter home and put him in a new clean (his house hadn’t been cleaned in much longer than a week) and larger house. We gave him a bowl with food and wormies – I spied on him several times during the night, wondering if he ever had a bowl because every time I filled his up he’d dump it out.

He was a cutie and looked like my Spikie which I kept



calling him and would end up calling him Sprinkles.

Thursday late afternoon I took him to the vet. When I took him out, there was fresh blood on his shirt. I never saw any before that. I explained everything to the vet, and they took him in to examine him. They always “ooooh” and “aaah” over my kids and were doing this while knocking him out. When I heard dead silence, I knew it was bad.

I went back and his poor little back leg was ten times its normal size from his ankle to his hip, and looked like it was ready to burst. She said the only thing she could do was remove the leg. I decided to let him go then – he had suffered enough.

After the rage and tears passed, I don’t believe he was left to suffer on purpose. I believe it was ‘accidental’ neglect on the parents’ part. They left too much responsibility to a young boy who didn’t want his pet “put down” as his father kept saying, so he waited for us to come along and help.

I promised him we would take the best care of Splinter that we could, and we did.

Rest in peace little Splinter – I’m sorry we didn’t meet sooner.

— Sondra and Kimberly