



Hedgehog Welfare Society Newsletter #77

September / October, 2015

To protect the well-being of pet hedgehogs through rescue, research and education of the people who care for them.



Hedgehog among Nasturtiums. Photo by M. Myhre

Animal People are the BEST

Jennifer Plombon, Minneapolis, MN & Blaine, WA



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<http://gallery.yopriceville.com/var/resizes/Free-Clipart-Pictures/Fall-PNG/Fall>

Several years ago, I adopted a retired racing Greyhound. She was my first dog. Greyhounds, by virtue of their focused upbringing for racing, can be a bit "quirky", to say the least. I soon realized that I needed some help and support to do right by my girl. I discovered the *Greytalk Forum*, an online forum of thousands of Greyhound owners, with individual forums in which one can ask about health, behavior, food, pet merchandise, etc. It is an invaluable resource for hounds and their people.

One forum is entitled "Cute & Funny Things Greyhounds Do". It is full of stories, photos, and touching love and support from its members to other members who need encouragement.

My girl is gone now, but I have remained a member of *Greytalk*. I especially like a small club within the "Cute & Funny" forum that its members call The Whirled Famous Unruly Boys Chat Club (long story about that name)! Just as with my hedgehog friends, I have many dear friends from this group whom I have never actually met in person. Many I have met. When I travel, just as I try to visit Hedgehog People, I also try to visit Greyhound People and get to know them and their pets even better. But the love and support

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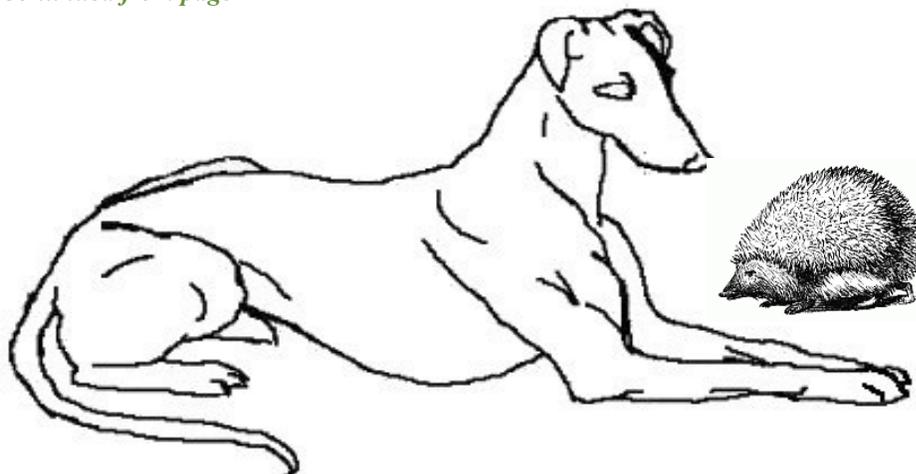
Samantha Richardson

Sadie Scholdt

Autumn Leaves clipart courtesy of:

<http://gallery.yopriceville.com/var/resizes/Free-Clipart-Pictures/Fall-PNG/Fall>

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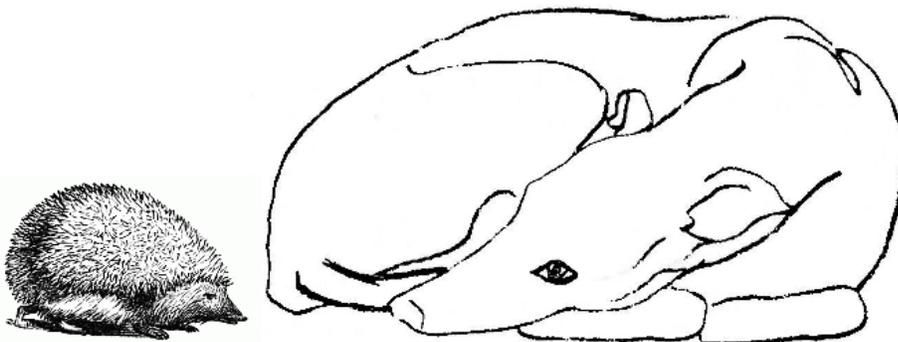


http://www.wpclipart.com/animals/dogs/G/greyhound/greyhound_BW/greyhound_laying_down.jpg
<http://www.reusableart.com/hedgehog-01.html>

these people offer each other through sickness, tragedy, worry, confusion and, yes, even Bridge Crossings, does not depend on face-to-face familiarity. The Club members know of my hedgehogs. In fact, I placed 2 of the Tweeds with one of its members, who had never even considered a hedgehog as a pet prior to learning about mine.

Within the Club when a beloved Greyhound dies, a collection is taken up to honor that dog and their person. Most of the collection is then donated to the person's adoption group, to vets who are well-known for Greyhound care, for research to help the person adopt another Greyhound and, often, for a small gift that honors that dog and that person.

When my hedgehog, Peaches, had to be euthanized due to WHS, followed within less than 3 weeks by my hedgehog, Ziggy, for the same reason, I was deeply sad and posted about it. Unbeknownst to me, a collection was taken up in honor of my hedgies. When the collection was completed, The Whirled Famous Unruly Boys Chat Club had collected \$390 and donated it to The Hedgehog Welfare Society in honor of Peaches and Ziggy — proving once again that Animal (loving) People are the BEST!



http://www.wpclipart.com/animals/dogs/G/greyhound/greyhound_BW/greyhound_curled_up_sketch.png.html
<http://www.reusableart.com/hedgehog-01.html>

Any information contained in this newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a replacement for veterinary care if your hedgehog is sick or injured. The HWS cannot be held liable for any information contained in this newsletter.

Responding to Online Hedgehog Ads

By Laura C. Dunklee

It can be upsetting to see hedgehogs for sale on online classifieds sites. While we understand that in an ideal world every hedgehog would end-up with an educated, knowledgeable caretaker, there's simply no way we can make that happen.

What we can do, though, is offer information to the hedgehog's new owner, in hopes of educating them about the unique care needs of these animals. After all, each of us had to start learning somewhere and if we can help someone from the get-go, the better for the hedgehog!

Below is a form letter you can customize and email to people who are selling hedgehogs online.

But first, a couple of notes:

1. We recommend you set-up an email address through Gmail or another site, which does not contain your name. When you create the account, somewhere in the form (depending on which email program you use), you will be asked to fill in your last name. We recommend using an initial or leaving it blank. This is for your privacy.

Use this email address to correspond with the seller. Also include it in the text of the form letter as your contact information (at the end of paragraph that appears after the list of resources). Do not include your last name when you sign the letter.

2. Do not include your phone number in the initial email. If the new owner contacts you, you can decide when and if you want to share any additional contact information.
3. Please include information about the local vet you use and recommend, and the nearest emergency vets who are experienced with and willing to see hedgehogs. It is valuable information and a personal referral carries a lot of weight.

The Hedgehog Welfare Society Board of Directors hopes this helps!

EMAIL TO SELLER

Hello –

I'm not able to pay the fee you're asking for your hedgehog, though I'd love to offer them a forever home.

However, I am a member of the Hedgehog Welfare Society (HWS). We provide a large range of resources to hedgehog owners, and I was hoping you'd pass along the following information to the new owner:

1. They can download a copy of a free Hedgehog Care Book, written by an experienced hedgehog caretaker: <http://westcoasthedgehogs.com/files/hedgehogbook/index.html>
2. They can visit the Hedgehog Welfare Society (HWS) website: <http://www.hedgehogwelfare.org> where we have:
 - A Care Sheet: http://hedgehogwelfare.org/Hedgehog_Care_Sheet.pdf
 - A Hedgehog FAQ: http://hedgehogwelfare.org/Hedgehog_FAQs.pdf
 - Newsletters filled with information: <http://hedgehogwelfare.org/newsletters.asp>
 - A state by state list of vets who have experience caring for hedgehogs: <http://hedgehogwelfare.org/veterinarians.asp>
3. The HWS also has a Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/98972897221/> and a Yahoo! discussion group: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/hedgehogwelfare/info>

I'd be glad to assist your hedgehog's new owner, if they'd like that type of support. I can be reached via email at: _____

The HWS also offers rehoming assistance and would be glad to help you place your hedgehog in a pre-screened home. The organization does not, however, allow for adoption or rehoming fees. If you'd like our help, please submit a relinquishment form: <http://hedgehogwelfare.org/relinquishment.asp>

Thanks for your time. I hope your hedgehog finds a marvelous new human!

Francesca Joy's History of Dental / Oral Issues

By Cyndy Bennett

Francesca Joy was born June 20, 2010, and came to live with us in October, 2010. On December 27, 2010 we brought her in for a check-up because she had stopped eating. One of our vets examined her and found her tongue to be slightly swollen and areas of her mouth to be irritated.



Francesca Joy's swollen tongue and irritated throat

Our vet told us to check everything in her environment including the food she was eating. Upon close inspection of her food, we found some kibble pieces that had particles sticking out of them. We stopped feeding her this food immediately and started her on *Royal Canin Baby Cat*.



Particles that were found in Francesca Joy's kibble

Francesca had dental issues and had a number of teeth pulled due to looseness. She went in for a checkup every six months. Besides loose teeth and an occasional ear infection, all seemed to be well. She did have to be spayed due to changes in her uterus.

On July 21, 2013, Francesca went in for a checkup and our vet found a pedunculated gingival mass noted on the lingual aspect of left upper carnassial tooth. The tooth was very loose.

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The tooth and mass were removed and sent out for pathology. Notes on the microscopic findings included the following:

Gingival mass/lesion, lingual aspect of left upper carnassial tooth: Inflammatory gingival hyperplasia. No evidence of squamous cell carcinoma. Squamous dysplasia is currently quite mild and consistent with cellular reactivity induced by the inflammatory process. Trauma to the lingual mucosa at this site may have been of factor in development of this inflammatory lesion, particularly if there is no evidence of more diffuse dental/oral disease. Close future monitoring/follow-up is suggested.

We continued to make follow-up visits about every six months.

On July 1, 2015, Francesca went in for her checkup and a large oral mass which had not been there six months earlier was found as well as another loose tooth. The vet found the hard palate raised, erosive plaque in a 1 x 1.5 cm region left caudal aspect associated with a loose carnassial tooth which was removed and sent out for pathology. Laser treatment was done to the roof of the mouth and close monitoring followed. She was on pain medication for a few days and we were instructed to keep her quiet which was easier said than done with our wild, wiggly, little Francesca.



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Pathology microscopic interpretation: Squamous cell carcinoma. Margins: Extends to margins and into the underlying tissues. Oral squamous cell carcinomas are aggressive tumors. Typically, they are locally infiltrative and may extend to involve underlying bone. Eventual metastasis to regional lymph nodes may occur.

On July 23, 2015, Francesca Joy lost her battle to squamous cell carcinoma. Below are pictures taken at the vet's office which show how extensive the mass had become. Within the last 24 to 48 hours the mass doubled in size.

Our vet asked if there was any bleeding. We saw no bleeding. He told us they were surprised that the sinus area did not start bleeding and said that once the bleeding started Francesca would have bled out with in a matter of minutes.



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This article was written in memory of our sweet Francesca Joy AKA: Little Frannie, Head of Security and Super Spy. She earned the name because she always had to know who came in the hedgie room and who was visiting.



We miss you and your little hedgie kisses.

Thoughts from the CVO

By Deb Weaver

Why does summer always pass so quickly? First it's Memorial Day, then July 4th and, as you read this, in a week it will be Labor Day. I hope everyone had a great summer filled with everything you were wishing for. There is certainly something to be said for longer days, warmer temps, and a slower pace.

I had a very nice summer here in Milwaukee - - well until a couple of weeks ago. That's when my immediate supervisor resigned and we were told by the university that her position was frozen and that her duties would have to be picked up by everyone else. So far about 1/3 of her duties have landed on my desk, most of it relating to budgets.

My first reaction was "BUDGETS!" Just to be clear, I don't balance my checkbook. I'm in a panic about this. I've been here 38 years, and can push out a pretty incredible amount of work. However to take on such a huge, time consuming task (with a steep learning curve), may be more than I can accomplish. Everyone keeps saying "you'll get the hang of it, you'll be successful." Meanwhile all I can picture in my mind is a headline in the student newspaper screaming "department goes bankrupt."

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about success in the piece below. It's my favorite definition of success - - hopefully my boss agrees with the definition as well!

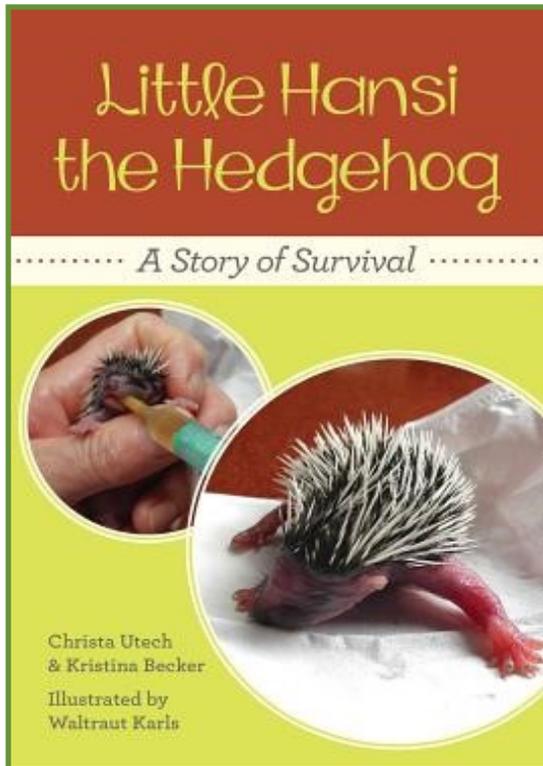
Definition of Success

Laugh often and much,
To win the respect of intelligent people,
And the affection of children.
To earn the appreciation of honest critics.
And endure the betrayal of false friends.

To appreciate beauty,
To find the best in others.

To leave the world a bit better,
Whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,
Or a redeemed social condition.

To know even one life has breathed easier,
Because you lived,
This is to have succeeded.



The Literary Hedgehog

Little Hansi the Hedgehog : A Story of Survival

Kristina Becker is a veterinary assistant who lives in Mettenheim, Germany, with her husband, an adopted cat and five goats. Every spring she prepares cages for baby birds that fall from their nests, and fosters them until they are able to fly away.

One day in May, following a night of rain, Kristina was walking through a vineyard picking up snails from the dirt road so that they would not be crushed by the farm tractor. Then she spotted something unusual lying in the road. It was a newborn hedgehog no bigger than her thumb! She closed her hand carefully around the tiny hedgehog and ran home.

Kristina named the little hedgehog Hansi. She carefully washed him, then weighed him. He weighed 18 grams, or 0.63 ounces. Using a syringe, she fed him a mixture of kitten milk and fennel tea. He was put to bed in a box lined with cotton balls and warmed with a hot water bottle. For the first week he was fed every hour. By the end of the second week, he weighed 60 grams!

Hansi thrived under Kristina's care. After three weeks, he moved to a large cage and was allowed to eat cooked eggs along with his kitten milk. At four weeks he was a hedgehog teenager and began to eat cat food. His weight had increased to 184 grams.

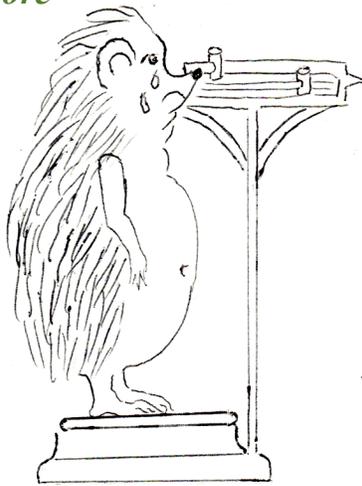
Eventually Hansi was released into the wild in an area that was far from people and traffic. He lived in a meadow near a pond where he could find plenty of earthworms, insects, roots, and berries.

Kristina and her friend Christa Utech, a physician who lives in Scottsdale, Arizona and Mettenheim, Germany, wrote this children's book about Hansi's rescue.

The book has many photographs as well as colorful illustrations by Waltraut Karls, a freelance illustrator who lives in Germany. She has worked with children and adolescents and illustrated books and posters. She is also a batik artist and the author of a murder mystery *Alstadt Blues (Old City Blues)*.

This tiny book is available in two formats: Kindle and paperback. However, it was published independently and may be difficult to find. It is available from Amazon and used copies may be found through Alibris, Ebay, and Thrift Books.

Utech, Christa and Kristina Becker. *Little Hansi the Hedgehog: A Story of Survival*. Illustrated with photographs and drawings by Waltraut Karls. San Bernadino, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014. ISBN: 978-1481039260

Before*Drawing by M. Myhre*

Helping A Hedgehog Lose Weight

By Laura C. Dunklee,

HWS Co-Chair for Health, Research, and Education

HELPING A HEDGEHOG LOSE WEIGHT: WHY AND HOW

Sometimes a hedgehog ends up overweight, usually due to a combination of diet, inactivity, and genetics. As with humans and other animals, being overweight or obese can lead to many health issues, including problems with the cardiovascular system and joints, as well as a greater likelihood of strokes and cancer. From a quality-of-life viewpoint, being overweight and inactive means your hedgehog is likely sleeping a lot or just lying around, rather than enjoying life.

ESSENTIAL: *Before starting your hedgehog on any weight loss regimen, you need to take them to the vet for a thorough exam and discussion of your plans. It is essential your vet knows what's going on and agrees this is a good course of action; your vet also needs to assess your hedgehog to ascertain there's not something other than diet, inactivity, or genetics that's led to the obesity.*

DETERMINING IF YOUR HEDGEHOG IS OVERWEIGHT

Hedgehogs come in many shapes and sizes. One hedgehog might be the right weight, for their body shape, at 250 grams, and another might be at the right weight for their shape at 700 grams. Looking at the numbers on a scale is not the best way to determine if your hedgehog needs to lose weight.

Instead, the accepted way is to take your hedgehog in your hands and get him or her to roll into a ball. If your hedgehog cannot roll into a tight ball and there is belly fur showing, then your little one needs to shed some grams. If they can roll into a tight ball however, with no belly fur showing, then they might still be overweight. Your vet can show you how to look for fat deposits, usually found in the "armpits," which often appear as yellowish blobs under the skin (Please see "What is the Right Weight for My Hedgehog?" an article in the *HWS Newsletter, Vol. 74* for more information (<http://hedgehogwelfare.org/newsletters/volume74.pdf>)).

Before proceeding any further, it is important to stress that you need to speak with your vet before putting your hedgehog on any weight loss program.

TWO PARTS TO WEIGHT LOSS

As with humans, if weight loss is to be successful and the hedgehog is to be healthy, the program must involve both a change in diet (type of food and amount) and an increase in activity. To just change or decrease the amount of food might result in the loss of some fat, but your hedgehog also needs to exercise more to build cardiovascular strength.

Part One: Changes in Diet

You're going to need to put your hedgehog on a diet that is lower in fat. If you feed a kibble-based diet, you need to purchase several lower fat kibbles to create a good mixture. First look for low-fat or weight control versions of your hedgehog's current kibble brand(s). These will make the transition to the new, lower fat kibble easier.

If your brand doesn't have a low-fat version, then look for kibbles with whole meat as the first one or two ingredients. The protein content should be around 30% to 35%, and should contain about 8% to 12% fat. Brands like *Wellness*, *Lotus*, *Blue Buffalo*, *Hill's Science Diet*, and *Innova* are worth considering, as they offer weight management versions of their kibble. Note that manufacturers' often change formulations, so you must read the ingredients and the fat and protein percentages every time you purchase a new bag!

Transitioning to the New Kibble Mixture

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Your hedgehog may initially turn-up their nose at the new food, preferring to eat what's more familiar, but they will adjust.

Expect some changes in their feces, in terms of amount, color, consistency, and scent. This is normal. If your hedgehog develops diarrhea, or very soft stools, though, take them back to their regular kibble and talk with your vet about options.

There is some disagreement in the hedgehog community about whether an overweight hedgehog, who is on a diet, should be given a limited amount of low-fat kibble each day or should be free-fed. This is a matter you need to discuss with your vet.

If you don't want to buy several bags of kibble, there are people in the hedgehog community who make and sell kibble mixes, including low-fat versions.

Fresh Food

You can offer your hedgehog fresh food, in addition to their kibble. Choose foods that are lower in fat. Steamed or boiled chicken or turkey is usually enjoyed, as is broiled or poached salmon and tuna. With meats, do not season and offer only in small amounts, preferably less than a teaspoon. You can also offer hard-boiled eggs or scrambled eggs, too, but just a bit. The egg white is lower in fat than the yolk.

For fresh vegetables, steamed, baked, or boiled sweet potatoes, unseasoned, are popular, and some hedgehogs enjoy green beans, too. Again, feed in very small amounts. Stay away from vegetables that are higher in sugars like corn and peas.

Insects

Unfortunately, most insects are high in fat, with wax worms being the worst, followed by mealworms. However, if you can find silkworms, your hedgehog might like them. Be forewarned that not all hedgehogs like silkworms, though, so only purchase a few. You can still offer mealworms, but it's best to make your hedgehog work for them (see below). Crickets are a good choice, as are Dubia roaches.

It's important that your hedgehog consumes an adequate amount of fiber, preferably from several sources, including their kibble, fresh vegetables, and insects. Feeding a variety of healthy foods will help ensure this happens.

Part Two: Increasing Activity

Along with a change in diet, getting your hedgehog moving around more will help them lose weight and become healthier. However, as with humans, the longer a hedgehog has been sedentary and out of shape, the more challenging it can be to motivate them into being active. That said, there are some innate hedgehog behaviors that an owner can capitalize on to encourage more activity.

Hedgehogs are, by their very nature, curious. In the wild, they need to move around and explore in order to find food. Since the hedgehogs we have as companion animals aren't actually "domesticated," they still have this drive. By providing cage enrichment and a proper wheel, you can encourage more natural behavior.

Four Simple, Environmental Changes

One: Get your hedgehog a good wheel. Heavier hedgehogs need a wheel that is not just solid bottomed, but has a large enough diameter that their body can fully stretch out when they're running, and that has a wide running surface so they won't fall or slip off.

The wheel also needs to have a sturdy base, because the weight of the hedgehog's body coming down on the wheel surface can cause jostling and with an unsteady base, the wheel can tip over.

Finally, the wheel needs to be set low to the ground, so that the hedgehog can easily and safely get in to and out of it. The large cake-top wheels are perfect.

Two: Provide your hedgehog with as large of a living enclosure as you can. The more space they have to move around in, the better. Some hedgehogs don't like a lot of open space, but if you fill their living area with things to explore, chances are pretty good they will start checking out the additional space, thereby increasing the amount they're moving around.

Three: Fill the habitat with items that will stimulate their curiosity and desire to investigate. Some ideas are:

- PVC pipes that are four-inches in diameter and with smoothed ends or that have end pieces that cover the cut surface. You can make mazes out of connected tubes, with curves and angles and such. Hedgehogs love to run through them.

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- Empty facial tissue boxes. Remove the plastic sheet where the tissues pull through, cut off one or both ends. Again, hedgehogs love to run through them, as well as climb over them, nose under them, and otherwise interact with them.
- A dig box or bowl or dish filled with flat, glass aquarium stones, or small tumbled stones. You want stones that are large enough that the hedgehog won't be able to fit them into their mouth, but small enough that they can root through them. "Lace" the dig box with a few treats to encourage foraging. If you're using glass stones, check them every morning to make sure that none have broken or cracked.
- Anything that your hedgehog might be inclined to nose around, under, over, or through. This is where you can be creative. Small plastic tubs turned upside down work, as do cat toys and balls that make sounds. Use only toys that are solid and don't have any tiny openings that a hedgehog could slip their foot into and get trapped.
- When you're enriching the habitat, add a few elements at a time and periodically change the arrangement, adding, removing, and shifting placement. This will also encourage exploration. Caution: Do not do this if your hedgehog is sight impaired or blind. In that case you need to keep everything the same for their safety and comfort.

Four: Make your hedgehog work for their food by placing their dishes far away from their sleeping area, or even placing food in several smaller dishes, so they have to move to get to it.

Playtime!

In addition to the food changes, and modifying the hedgehog's environment, you should get your hedgehog out to interact with you and move around every evening. The best way is to either hedgehog-proof a room or part of a room, or use an enclosure of some sort, and then stock it with things to explore.

Hedgehog-Proofing

You need to get down at floor level and think like a hedgehog. They are going to be looking for dark places to crawl into, so that means under couches, loveseats, and recliners. They will also go behind bookcases and other furniture. If you have cabinets in the room, they will likely have gaps at the bottom, between the baseboard and the base of the cabinet. Get down at floor level, with a flashlight, and look / feel to find the gap. This is a preferred hiding place for many hedgehogs.

One solution to hedgehog-proofing a room or play area is to use the cube grid panels that are used in the *Cubes & Coroplast* cage designs. Just be sure to use the ones with the smaller inner squares, so your hedgehog can't squeeze through. And, if your hedgehog is a climber, cover the wires with Coroplast or cardboard to prevent the hedgehog from scaling the wall.

If you choose not to hedgehog-proof, but to go with an enclosure instead, you have a couple of options. Some people like children's plastic wading pools. Other owners opt for collapsible doggie playpens, made from fabric, and still others use small animal play pens, which consist of short grids wired together. This latter option requires you to be constantly watching your hedgehog, as they can easily nose under or climb over the wall and disappear.

Once your area has been hedgehog-proofed, or you've set-up the play area, make sure it's properly warm (aim for 75-degrees, or thereabouts) in the room, especially at floor level, and fill the play space with all kinds of things to explore and do. Start with what you've used in your hedgehog's enclosure and build out from there. Be creative. The point is to stimulate their mind, and get them moving and exploring.

In the evening, after your hedgehog has woken, gone to the bathroom, and eaten a bit, bring them into the play area, darken the lights, and sit with them. Then place them on the floor in front of you and wait patiently while they acclimate and start moving around. If they amble to a corner and go to sleep, bring them back to your lap, play with them, and put them down again. This will take time, but your hedgehog should give into their curiosity, at some point.

It's essential you spend time interacting with your hedgehog. If your little one is very sedentary, they're not going to want to get up and moving, but you can encourage them. Play with them. Pet them. Talk with them. This gives you more time to bond with your companion, too, in addition to keeping them alert and, hopefully, moving around.

Hydro or Swim Therapy

Some owners have used swim therapy with their hedgehogs to aid in weight loss and improving overall health. This can work well if you have a hedgehog who isn't terrified of water. If they are, you can try it as a gradual thing, easing into the process. If your hedgehog panics every time they get near water, though, please don't stress them.

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Get ready with several towels, as you would for bath time, and then fill a bathtub with several inches of warm water. If your hedgehog is not thrilled about water, you can adjust the level so they can walk / touch the bottom at the shallow end. Place your hedgehog in the deep end, so they need to swim a bit, and then guide them to the shallow end, so they learn where to go when they need a break. Keep your hand under their belly to support them as they get used to being in the water, so they don't panic and overexert themselves.

You'll need to start very slowly with swim therapy. Unlike wandering around (and eventually running around), swimming is instant exertion on the muscles, including the heart. Just a few minutes at a time, every day or two, is good. Be sure to completely dry the hedgehog before returning them to their habitat.

DON'T GIVE UP!

Assisting a hedgehog to lose weight and get in shape can be a challenge. But it is possible to help your hedgehog get healthier; you're just going to need to be creative. Talk with your vet about the situation and start making some positive changes in your hedgehog's diet and environment. You can do this!

After*Drawing by M. Myhre*

September 14

Violet Weaver

October 22

Avery Becker

October 28

Tuni Hannigan

Hedgehog Décor : A Hedgehog Pencil Holder



This wooden pencil holder is a product of the Czechoslovakian pencil manufacturing company *Koh-i-noor Hardtmuth*. It is designed to hold 24 pencils in the 8 mm holes on the hedgehog's back. It is made from 100% FSC certified wood-eco forestry. Without its pencil quills, the hedgehog measures 13 X 17.5 X 17.5. It is available through *Amazon* as well as several stationary and art supply stores.

ARTISTS WANTED



Would you like to help illustrate the Newsletter? We are always looking for drawings, photographs and art work to include here.

Send your submissions in JPEG Format to:
newsletter@hedgehogwelfare.org

WRITERS WANTED



Would you like to write for the Newsletter? We are always looking for stories, poems, craft projects, recipes, puzzles, and articles to include here.

Send your submissions or article proposals to:
newsletter@hedgehogwelfare.org