



Hedgehog Questions for Lizzie

Thanks for all your brilliant hedgehog-themed questions at this week's Explorers at Home online session. As promised, I have gathered your questions below and Lizzie has added her answers. She does know a lot doesn't she!

Ele: Just make sure she doesn't google them!

Answer: I promise I won't Google!

Leon: What is the size of hedgehogs?

Answer: Between 20-25cm long. In the autumn they weigh the most, about 1.5Kg for an adult. We have had some come into the rescue at 2Kg though!

alexander: What does a hedgehog live in

Lottie Murphy: where do they live?

Leon: Where is there natural habitat

Answer: As long as there is enough food, water, shelter and other hedgehogs, they can live anywhere. They do seem to prefer our gardens, hedgerows, parks and the edges of deciduous woodlands (leaves are used for bedding compared to coniferous woodlands) as there is more food, compared to large fields with pesticides used.

Family Gough: how many hedgehogs are there in the UK?

Ellie and George: Is climate change effecting hedgehogs?

Answer: It's thought there are around 1.5 million hedgehogs in the UK (thanks to research by Hedgehog Street!). It sounds like a lot, but it was estimated that in the 1950s there was about 30 million hedgehogs, which is a big decline! We have had a big impact of their population, which is why it's so important we all try to help.

Climate change might be having an impact of hedgehog too. With the milder temperatures in winter, hedgehogs enter and exit hibernation more, which wastes a lot of energy and can be fatal for hedgehogs, especially as there is not enough food in winter for the hedgehogs to survive. The warmer

autumns also mean some female hedgehogs have later litters. These litters are then too small for hibernation and most do not make it through the winter. Around 50% of hedgehogs don't make it to 1 years old!

Tyler: wat is the oldest heghog

Answer: Good question! For wild hedgehogs, they normally live to 2/3 years of age, if they are lucky they can live to 7. Very occasionally they can live above 10 years old! When they are in captivity (not as pets!) in rescue centres they can live longer as they are less dangers of predators and hibernation troubles, one was thought to be 15 years old!

karina: If we make a hedgehog home, is there anything that we could do to keep rats out?

karina: Is there any food that hedgehogs like that rats don't?

Answer: Rats are tricky/Rats are known to not like open spaces, so leaving the food in the middle of the lawn might put them off. If that doesn't work, then it is best not to leave food out. Try and attract natural food hedgehog like instead like caterpillars, slugs, beetles and worms. I do not think there is a way to make a hedgehog home rat proof, as they can get anywhere hedgehogs can. I still recommend making a hedgehog house though, as rats do not tend to use them.

Ele: Can hedgehogs get hurt by their own prickles?

Answer: Hehe that's a great question! They don't get hurt by their own spikes. The hedgehog has fur over its tummy, legs, neck and head, which means when it curls into a ball and points its spikes in all directions, it's cosy on the inside and won't get hurt.

Anne Martin: are they out of hibernation now?

Alice: when will hedgehogs come out of hibernation? Should we put food out for them yet?

Leon: What do they eat?

Answer: Great questions! With the winter being mild, some might not have even gone into hibernation! However if they did, then they might have already started to come out of hibernation. Males tend to rouse first, around March, with females following April time. It's always good to leave food out throughout the year. In the winter you can leave a little less out, but having some is great as hedgehogs do wake up briefly throughout winter and may want to replenish energy lost. Food you can feed them is wet or dry cat/dog food, or hedgehog food in a shallow dish. Put a small bowl of water with it too! If you don't want bigger animals to eat it, then you can make a hedgehog feeder. Have a look online for some great ideas!

Alex P: We have a hole in our garden that we think might be home for a mouse. What food should we put out?

Answer: That's a lovely question. I honestly don't know lots about what to feed mice! I would have thought seeds and grains might be good, but it might be worth a Google to check.

Ellie and George: Do hedgehogs have the large intestine?

elliott Kenny: What does hedgehog poop look like?

Answer: Oooo this is a good question! I'm not sure if they have both small and large intestines. They definitely do have intestines though, about 1 metre long.

Hedgehog poop is pretty easy to tell, it looks like a black/dark brown slug! It's cylindrical in shape and should have signs of exoskeletons from the beetles eaten. Hedgehogs will poo anywhere to make room for more food, so I think you are lucky to find one!

Louisa Bates: what is the name for a male hedgehog

Answer: Good question! Boars are males and sows are females!

Seb Lee: Do hedgehogs have predators? if they do do they get scared?

FOXPLAYZ: CAN FOXES ATTACK HEDCHOGS

Answer: Predators are always cool to talk about! The main predator of a hedgehog in the UK is the badger. However, they are competitors first as they eat the same food (badgers love worms!). If there is enough food, then badgers won't bother hedgehogs. When there isn't enough food then hedgehogs may become prey. However, hedgehogs are much better at adapting to new habitats so they tend to move away to where there is more food. So even though badgers get bad press for eating hedgehogs, they are not the reason for their decline. Other predators may be foxes, however they don't have the power to open up a curled hedgehog and they prefer easy meals. Sometimes corvid birds (like crows) may try to eat a very sick hedgehog too.

Jenna: could they get stuck in the mud if it is to wet

Answer: This is an interesting question, I have never thought about it! So hedgehogs can swim, and as long as they are strong enough and healthy, I would assume they won't have trouble with mud. However if one is poorly, injured or not very strong, then it may struggle in deep mud but the shallow mud in the footprint trap should be fine.

Aimee--: do hedgehogs mate for life?

Andrew: how many babies do hedgehogs have

Answer: Hedgehogs do not mate for life, in fact males and females may have multiple partners over the summer. Some litters are born with multiple dads! However, males have to impress females with a courtship dance called the 'hedgehog carousel', and most of the time the female isn't interested, so males are lucky to get to mate with a female! If the female does become pregnant, she usually has 4-5 hoglets in a litter. Some hedgehogs have just had 2 hoglets, or as many as 11 before! But the female only has 10 nipples, so any more than 10 hoglets and some might not survive.