

Caring for Hedgehogs in hot weather

When the weather is hot, or we go for a long spell without any rain, hedgehogs and other wildlife struggle to find their natural sources of water, and the ground becomes hard. Bugs and grubs" (hedgehog's preferred food source) go further down into the ground, becoming inaccessible.

You can help by:

- Leaving shallow bowls of fresh water, such as plant pot saucers, out for hedgehogs and other wildlife. Heavy bowls, such as ceramic or heavy plastic, are best! Pop a few pebbles in to make sure insects can enjoy a drink too – and escape. Just a single bowl of water in your front garden will help a lot!
- IF you can, consider creating a 13x13 cm (5x5”) hole in your back garden wall or fence – hedgehogs roam between 1-2 km each night, and giving them access to more gardens gives them more chances to find food and water.
- If you can, offer visiting hedgehogs some dry cat or dog food [in a separate bowl] too. Avoid meaty cat or dog food in hot weather, as it quickly attracts flies, who lay their eggs in it. Kitten biscuits or crushed cat biscuits are perfect! Avoid mealworms, calciworms and peanuts. It can be best to also avoid fish flavoured cat food or “muesli” type specialist hedgehog food.
- If using a feeding station, you may want to place the water bowl OUTSIDE the station – hedgehogs can be clumsy! Many also prefer some distance between their food and water.
- Clean the bowls out regularly, using a pet/animal safe cleaner.
- Never give hedgehogs milk, as it can cause them to have diarrhoea.
- Hedgehogs are adept swimmers and climbers, but they can't climb out of steep-sided ponds, pools or deep holes. If you have a pond and it doesn't have sloping sides, place a brick or a plank of wood wrapped in chicken wire at the side of the pond to give hedgehogs a quick route out, or use a pile of stones.
- Cover up drains and holes to prevent hogs getting trapped.
- Avoid lawn treatments, as they reduce worm populations. Pesticides, insecticides and slug pellets are toxic and reduce hedgehog's natural prey.
- If you see a hedgehog out during the day, 'sunbathing' - they actually are in need of urgent help – hedgehogs don't sunbathe. Using gloves, place it in a high-sided box and take it to a local rescue - Tiggywinkle's Animal Hospital in Haddenham is the best local place to take them.

Hedgehog Highway
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(Sources - British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS),
Hedgehogs R Us, HomeandRoost.co.uk)

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