

HEDGEHOG

The Latin name for the Hedgehog is *Erinaceus europaeus*.

Hedgehog is a common name for any of the several spiny mammals that are similar in appearance to the porcupine, but it is more closely related to the mole and shrew.

The hedgehog can be found in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

It has a coat of long, stiff, pointed spines on its back. These spines are brown, tipped with white and the fur below is rather paler and soft. Hedgehogs average 25cm in length and range in colour from light tan to black. They have a pointed nose, small eyes, short legs and a vestigial tail.

When threatened, the hedgehog rolls itself into a ball by the action of powerful muscles that arise from the head and neck on each side, which then loop around the rump. In this position its spines project in all directions.

Hedgehogs conceal themselves in hedgerows and suburban woodland during the daytime and emerge at night to hunt. They eat insects, worms, frogs, snakes, mice, and birds' eggs. They will often visit gardens and drink milk if it is left out for them.

They make nests of leaves and grass in woodpiles, compost heaps etc, in which 2-9 young are born in summer; occasionally they have a second litter later in the year. During the winter hedgehogs hibernate i.e. go into a very deep sleep. They are surprisingly agile, climb well and swim.