

## Handle Aggressive Hedgehogs

**Be prepared to handle aggressive hedgehog behaviors.**

*By Audrey Pavia*

Hedgehog Living Cactus Storm/© Courtesy Jennifer Young  
Pet hedgehogs are not usually aggressive unless they feel threatened.

When it comes to behavior, pet hedgehogs can pose a challenge sometimes. Hedgehogs can be very opinionated, and won't hesitate to let you know when they are unhappy or afraid.

One of the behavior issues you may run across with your hedgehog is aggression. Hedgehogs are not usually aggressive, but if they feel threatened, some hedgehogs will act aggressive in self-defense.

Hedgehogs demonstrate aggression by making hissing or clicking sounds. Sometimes, those sounds are followed by bites. On occasion, hedgehogs bite without making warning sounds first.

Hedgehogs often hiss or click when they feel threatened. If your hedgehog hisses or clicks at you when you pick it up, you need to spend more time bonding so it trusts you.

If you are holding your hedgehog and it bites you, it probably gave you a signal that it wanted to be put down. If you didn't heed this warning, the hedgehog may have tried to make its point with a bite. Don't punish it for this. Instead, become more alert to your hedgehog's signals that it wants to be left alone and honor its wishes before it bites.

Hedgehogs sometimes bite when they smell something they would like to taste on your fingers. If you have been handling food or something with a strong odor, like tobacco or hand lotion, wash your hands before picking up a hedgehog. If your small pet starts to lick your hand or fingers, a bite may soon follow. Discourage the licking by putting it down and washing your hands.

If a normally friendly hedgehog starts biting you for no reason when you handle it, take your small pet to a veterinarian. It may not be feeling well.

Hedgehogs can sometimes bite each other. Solitary living is preferred by most hedgehogs, and two hedgehogs put together in the same cage may fight using their teeth. If you have more than one hedgehog to a cage and they are biting each other, or one is biting the other, separate them. This aggression may escalate to the point of a fight, with one or both hedgehogs becoming seriously injured.