

Introducing A New Hedgehog

Tell others about a hedgehog before allowing them to interact with it.

By Audrey Pavia

People who aren't familiar with hedgehogs can have mixed reactions when first meeting these small animals. Some people find them cute, but are scared of the hedgehog's quills. Others are uncomfortable around hedgehogs because of their unusual appearance.

Introduce To Friends & Family

The best way to introduce family members to your hedgehog is to tell them as much as you can about the hedgehog personality. These wonderful critters are very endearing despite their pronged backs, and people often appreciate their personality once they come to know one.

If someone in your family wants to hold your hedgehog, wait until your small pet has had at least a week to get used to its new surroundings before allowing anyone to handle it. Handle your hedgehog yourself first to make sure it's comfortable being held before you hand it off to someone else.

When it's time for other family members to handle your hedgehog, suggest they wear gloves. This will reduce the likelihood of the hedgehog accidentally poking them with one of its quills. Ask the person to sit down on the floor while they hold the hedgehog so if they accidentally drop your small pet, it won't fall far. Pick your hedgehog up and place it in the person's cupped hands. Suggest they hold their hands against their body to provide the hedgehog with security.

Introduce To Another Hedgehog

Introducing your hedgehog to another hedgehog is a lot trickier than introducing it to your family. Hedgehogs are normally solitary animals in the wild, and prefer to live alone.

Female hedgehogs seem to get along better with each other than males do, so if you want to have more than one hedgehog, consider starting with a female. Better yet, get two females that are littermates and haven't yet been separated. These two will already be used to each other and you should be able to keep them together without a problem. (Don't house a male and female hedgehog together because they will breed and produce an unwanted litter.)

If you want to try adding a hedgehog to your family when you already have one, start by placing the hedgehogs in separate cages and putting the cages next to each other so the hedgehogs can see and smell each other but can't make contact. Watch them closely and wait for all signs of aggression to pass before going any further with the introduction. If the hedgehogs continue to behave aggressively toward each other after two weeks of living side by side in their own cages, they are unlikely to ever get along and should not be kept together.

If the hedgehogs do ok in side by side cages you can move on to the final step. Put the hedgehogs together in a third, "neutral" cage. Keep a close watch on the two. If the hedgehogs begin to fight, separate them immediately and start over by putting their original cages next to each other once again. Then, try putting them together again in another couple of weeks. If they continue to fight, it's unlikely they will ever get along. Keep them separated permanently, or try the introduction with a different he