



Caring for Autumn Juvenile Hedgehogs



Helping hedgehogs through the winter

Hedgehogs born late in the season will not have sufficient fat reserves to survive hibernation without some assistance.

Young hedgehogs found weighing less than 500 grams (1.1lb) at the end of the autumn will not have enough weight to see them through the winter. However this does depend on the weather – if it is forecast to stay mild and damp, the hedgehog will probably do just as well in the wild.

Juveniles found weighing under 300g may not yet be weaned and may be orphaned if found on their own, especially out in the open during the day. These very young hedgehogs should be kept warm – a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel is ideal. Young orphaned hedgehogs need more specialist care, so we would recommend passing these animals to an experienced [wildlife rehabilitator](#).

Juveniles found weighing between 300 and 500 grams after mid October can be housed indoors and fed two heaped tablespoons of food daily – crushed dog or cat biscuits (not fish based) or specialist hedgehog food provide bulk and roughage – to put on weight before being released to hibernate.



A temporary home for juvenile hedgehogs

A garage or similar building is an ideal temporary home, but don't put hedgehogs on a metal grid or wire floor – they have sensitive feet!

Place the hedgehog in a large box with plenty of clean, fresh hay, crumpled newspapers or dry leaves.

Take care to keep direct human contact to a minimum so that the hedgehog does not become unnaturally tame.

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Monitoring the juvenile hedgehog's progress

Monitor the hedgehog's weight regularly, daily at first.

If the hedgehog fails to gain weight, it may indicate another problem, such as lungworm. If this is the case, again we would recommend passing these animals to an experienced [wildlife rehabilitator](#).

On reaching a weight of between **550 and 680 grams** (1.2 – 1.5lbs) the young hedgehog – **if active and whilst the weather is still relatively mild** – can be released at night back to the area where it was found.



If an alternative release site is required, select an area where there are invertebrates (e.g. insects, slugs and earthworms), no potential hazards and signs of other hedgehogs being active in the local area. Continue to provide food and a shelter with nesting material to help the hedgehog build a winter nest – you might want to use a hedgehog nesting box packed with nesting material to release them.

If the weather continues to be harsh, then let them hibernate if they want to – just provide dry hedgehog food and water so that they can feed should they wake up.

Garages and similar buildings are ideal if they are not heated, as they will provide shelter from the worst of the elements but will be cold enough to encourage the hedgehog to hibernate.

Release the hedgehog in the spring – look out for others so that you know that they have emerged from hibernation.



To report an injured or sick hedgehog to the RSPCA please ring the 24-hour cruelty and advice line on
0300 1234 999

If you see a dead hedgehog please report it to
www.gardenwildlifehealth.org

