

THE HEDGEHOG



Arguably Britain's favourite mammal, the British hedgehog is a truly remarkable little creature. Despite being amazingly brave and resilient, they are in serious decline within the UK, most obviously in the East Midlands and East Anglia, resulting in them being added to the Red List, vulnerable to extinction. Sadly, this is mostly due to the actions of man.

Whilst they have been around for over half a million years, their numbers today are estimated at around just a million and it is suggested that if we do not help them, we may see our last hedgehog in as little as 5 years!

The natural habitat for hogs is open fields with hedgerows. With a lack of hedges, lack of water, increased use of pesticides and man destroying their habitats to build homes, hogs are being forced into urban areas where they face a multitude of hazards.



THE FOLLOWING ARE ALL VERY COMMON HAZARDS:

MOTOR VEHICLES - probably the worst hazard and the most upsetting as I would imagine 99% of hog road deaths are unavoidable, we've all seen the dead hogs on the road – FAR TOO MANY!!!

GARDEN/FOOTBALL NETTING - should be raised off the ground around 3"/7cm to allow room for hogs to crawl under to avoid loss of limbs or strangulation.

DRAINS/TRENCHES - should be covered to avoid hogs falling into.

GARDEN PONDS - should have a ramp or stepping stones to enable hogs to crawl out.

STRIMMERS/MOWERS - please do a gentle foot sweep prior to cutting grass as hogs suffer the most horrendous injuries from these machines. Most creatures, upon hearing a strimmer would run and escape, a hog will, as on the roads, FREEZE, so step back and give them a few minutes after sweeping so that they feel safe enough to run away.

BONFIRES - perfect nesting places for hibernation!!! Ideally build/move the bonfire on the day that it will be lit. Alternatively, raise the bonfire a few inches off the ground all around the base using a rake or similar. Escape time should be allowed as for strimmers.

COMPOST HEAPS - make ideal nesting places due to the warmth and insects, please take care with your forks not to disturb or harm females and possibly babies too!

UNDERNEATH SHEDS - is a common place to find hogs nesting, please check for nests prior to moving the shed. If the mum is frightened there is a chance she will kill her babies. Ideally delay moving the shed until hogs have left, if that's not an option please contact Hedgehog Rescue for help and advice.

RAT TRAPS - please be aware that anywhere a rat can get, (including bait boxes), a hog can get too.

POISON - same applies as with traps, but hogs are carnivores, if they come across a dead rat, they will eat it. Obviously if the rat was poisoned, the hog will be too.

SLUG PELLETS - these have the same effect on hogs as they do the slugs.

GARDEN CHEMICALS - a huge problem for hogs - weedkiller, patio cleaners etc. Please check if animal friendly or use alternative natural methods.

CORVIDS - when a hedgehog lies dormant through dehydration, malnutrition, injury, illness etc, many birds - magpies, crows, rooks etc will viscously attack it, leaving deep wounds through pecking and even pecking their eyes out.

TICKS - East Anglia generally has a high number of ticks. This year in particular the hogs are coming into rescues with an extremely high tick burden. If a hog has just a few visible ticks but appears otherwise lively it is not of concern as they will drop off. If they have more than 6, it is advisable to get them checked out as they could well have sometimes a couple of hundred hidden in their fur and spines, ears, tummy, legs etc which **WILL MAKE HOGS SERIOUSLY ILL OR KILL** through de-hydration and infections. Please **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE** yourselves.

FLIES – Flystrike is fly eggs which resemble tiny rice grains and will be anything from whiteish to yellow in colour. They are laid on the Hog and will hatch within around 12 hours into **MAGGOTS** which proceed to enter the body through any orifice and **EAT THE HEDGEHOG ALIVE FROM THE INSIDE.**

BADGERS, FOXES, STOATS - amongst others, are all natural predators to the hog. If you are aware of a badger I would suggest stopping feeding the hogs until it has moved on as it **WILL** kill the hogs. Foxes will kill them if hungry, some find feeding the fox away from the hogs works ok, but I don't think I would risk it and would stop feeding until Mr Fox moves on.

WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP THE HOGS

MAKE A HEDGEOG HIGHWAY - a 4"/CD size hole in your garden fence to enable the hogs to pass through your garden into the neighbouring properties. Hedgehogs need to roam approximately 2km every night to get the sustenance they need.

PUT FOOD AND WATER OUT FOR HOGS - preferably **KITTEN BISCUITS** as the kibble is smaller so all ages including hoglets along with the elderly that have lost most of their teeth can feed. If cats pinching the food is a problem and to keep it dry, a **FEEDING STATION** can be easily made using a plastic storage container. Turn upside down, cut 4"/CD size hole as the entrance. Turn back over and place a house brick or similar on top to hold down and another across the front 4" from the entrance. Ideally place away from the perimeter.



WATER IS SO IMPORTANT - with our springs and summers becoming so dry, dehydration and malnutrition is a massive problem for the hogs and leads to many orphan hoglets – no water also results in no food as insects and worms don't surface and leads to many orphan hoglets.

PUT OUT A HEDGEHOG HOUSE - preferably in amongst foliage. Fill with straw and put dead leaves around outside for extra bedding. Never put food IN the Hog House as it will encourage predators.

IF YOU SEE A HEDGEHOG OUT DURING THE DAY

Hedgehogs **DO NOT SUNBATHE**, if you see a hog out during the day, unless it is pregnant/a nursing mother, (in which case it will be very active, on a mission to collect bedding or food for hoglets), it needs **IMMEDIATE HELP**. Please follow Instructions below.

- 1 **PICK IT UP** - using gloves or cloth to avoid possible ringworm
- 2 **PLACE IN A HIGH SIDED BOX** - preferably with a lid as they do climb.
- 3 **IF IT DOESNT HAVE FLY STRIKE OR IS NOT BLEEDING HEAVILY - GIVE SOME FORM OF HEAT** - a hot water bottle or a rubber glove with slightly hot water **COVER WITH A CLOTH** to avoid burning, and ensure the hog can move off if it gets too hot. This needs to be given however hot it is outside!
- 4 **GIVE IT A BOWL OF WATER, but NO FOOD**

5 PHONE A RESCUE - DO NOT DELAY - It may appear lively and ok, but if it is out during the day there is something wrong with it - a wound you can't see, fly strike underneath, parasites etc.

THEY ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX CREATURES - DO NOT TRY AND LOOK AFTER IT YOURSELF, IT WILL LIKELY COST IT ITS LIFE HAVING HAD THE STRESS OF BEING PICKED UP (TO THEM WE ARE PREDATORS).

IT MAY LOOK LIVELY AND TRY TO ESCAPE, THAT DOESNT MEAN IT'S OK - IT IS A WILD ANIMAL AND WON'T SHOW WEAKNESS AS THIS MAKES IT VULNERABLE - IT IS NOT A PET, PLEASE TAKE THE BOX INDOORS IN A QUIET AREA AWAY FROM CHILDREN OR NOISY DOGS.

NUMBERS TO KEEP HANDY

PACT ANIMAL SANCTUARY - 01362 820775

BHPS - 01584 890801 - Have a list of local rescues and telephone numbers

Charlies Helpline - 07835 498970 - Local helpline that will put you in touch with somewhere that is able to take it in

TAVERHAM VETS - 01603 867330 - Out of hours vet

THE HOGHOUSE, LONG STRATTON, is currently not taking in due to injury, but happy to advise - 07766 913370

Although we are temporarily unable to take new patients, we do have existing guests that need to be kept over winter. If you have a couple of hours in the morning free during the week and would like to get down and dirty with the hogs (cleaning, feeding etc), we always welcome volunteers!

Thank you for taking the time to read,

Tracy, The Hog House: Hedgehog Help

