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# What do hedgehogs eat?

Hedgehogs mostly eat invertebrates at ground level that are inactive. They are opportunistic omnivores though and will sometimes eat eggs, small mammals, chicks, frogs, flies and carrion. Up to 10% of their diet comprises smaller slugs (and sometimes snails) so they are a great method of pest control! They tend to eat in two sittings each night, with a digestive rest period in between. Lactating females will need to eat 3x as much food!



British Hedgehog Preservation Society

April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Caterpillars	Weevils	Ground beetles; Crane fly larvae	Crane fly larvae; Scarab beetles	Scarab beetles	Scarab beetles; Slugs; Earwigs	Scarab beetles; Slugs; Millipedes; Earwigs
Earthworms						

Earthworms are a favoured food source, packed full of calories. When there are drought conditions, worms will burrow deeper underground and hedgehogs will find it hard to access them so may switch to other food sources e.g. earwigs, beetles. Gardens are an important habitat for earthworms - the average UK garden could have over 15,000 earthworms! Head to <https://www.opalexplornature.org/soilsurvey> to find and identify the worms in your garden.

## Boosting food in your garden:

By encouraging invertebrates into your garden, with features such as a log pile and mini wildflower meadow, hedgehogs may come to forage. Be sure to limit your chemical use - download our **Hedgehog-Friendly Gardening Pack** for natural methods of pest control.

## Putting out food in your garden:

You can also put out food e.g. meaty cat/dog food. They do not rely on this extra supplementary food, but it can particularly help when food is harder to access in dry weather and when youngsters are trying to fatten up in the autumn ready for hibernation. Youngsters generally eat more vertebrate food, perhaps because they are not yet skilled at getting invertebrates. Hedgehogs mostly get fluid from their prey but a shallow saucer of water or moist food put out can be helpful, especially in hot weather. You can make your own feeding station to deter other animals from eating the food...

## Mealworms?

Anecdotal reports suggest that eating lots of mealworms can lead to calcium stripping and Metabolic Bone Disease in hedgehogs. Scientific investigation is underway but until we know more, only put out mealworms sparingly as a treat with other food. Eating too much of any one food is unlikely to be good for hedgehogs either way!

## No bread and milk

Bread has little nutrition for 'hogs and because they are lactose intolerant, milk and dairy products can cause diarrhoea in 'hogs and strip them of nutrients.

## Salmonella

Hedgehogs can become infected with a strain of *Salmonella*. Scatter food put out for them and/or regularly clean feeding bowls (do this outside using brushes solely for that purpose), leaving them to air dry before use. Don't put out fish-based foods or cooked meat that quickly goes off, especially in hot weather.

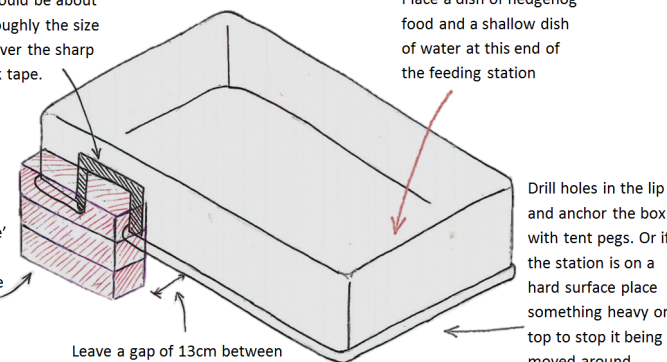


Their dark droppings (often left on garden lawns) typically shine with insect remnants, such as beetle exoskeletons.

Cut a hole from the long edge of the box. It should be about 13cm square, roughly the size of a CD case. Cover the sharp edges with thick tape.

Place a dish of hedgehog food and a shallow dish of water at this end of the feeding station

Make a tunnel called a 'baffle' by placing a small stack of bricks in front of the entrance to the feeding station.



Leave a gap of 13cm between the 'baffle' and the box, plenty big enough for a hedgehog to move through.

Drill holes in the lip and anchor the box with tent pegs. Or if the station is on a hard surface place something heavy on top to stop it being moved around