



LET'S TALK ABOUT  
GOLDEN OLDIES  
HOW TO CARE  
FOR OLDER HOGS

AN APH CARE GUIDE

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# OLDER HOGS - CARE TIPS

This post is dedicated to the golden oldies. As you are probably aware Pygmy hedgehogs generally have a short life span, anything over 3 is considered an OAP, although I have seen some exceptional hogs reach the age of 9 or 10. But how do you care for an older hog? Hopefully this guide will help.

The first signs that I knew something was wrong with my elderly hog, Bramble, was when I started to see his activity slowing down, he tended to sleep more, was not using his wheel much, and his appetite had decreased. I temporarily resolved this by turning up his heating. Older hogs do better at a higher temperature and this tends to help them become more active again, so if your hog is slowing down crank up the thermostat a couple of degrees, it can make all the difference.

I then noticed that his paws were starting to curl over on his front feet, and his front legs looked swollen. This was clearly the start of arthritis, which is very common in hogs. My advice is controversial, there has been no studies done on hedgehogs, but a well known breeder recommended a drop of hemp oil on his food. This has to be 1500mg hemp oil. Only one drop on their food 3-4 times a week. Within two days I could see Bramble's paws uncurling and he was walking much better. At the end of the day, it's your choice, it worked for me and others I know use it successfully, just make sure you are using the correct dosage.

Like humans, hogs eyes deteriorate as they get older, they often suffer with cataracts. Their sense of smell remains good, however, it is best practise to keep everything in the same place so they know exactly where everything is.



He then started to not be eating his kibble. I tried everything, from grinding it down with a mortar and pestle, soaking it in warm water and tempting him with Royal Canin mother and baby cat (small kibble that most hogs love), but my awkward hog decided he was not eating kibble anymore. At this point he was still eating his bugs, so I was not overly worried, but it's best to keep them on the kibble if possible as it gives them a more rounded diet and the kibble helps clean their teeth. When they stop eating kibble it is always wise to check their teeth as it can often be down to a simple tooth infection. Royal Canin is also very good as it is high fat and older hogs tend to lose weight. I weighed Bramble weekly to ensure he was getting enough nutrition from his food.



Since I could not tempt him with kibble I decided I would start feeding him "raw food". There are many varieties, one being Puriform, but a more cost friendly product is Natures Menu meat cubes. I simply popped out one cube a night, let it defrost and he had a nice meal ready along with some yummy bugs.



I then noticed he was not eating his bugs, he was chewing them up, sucking at the insides and leaving the carcasses. A quick look in his mouth showed he only had 3 front teeth, so little wonder he could not chew. He carried on eating the raw food and sucking the guts out of bugs for a few months and seemed to be doing fine. Then he



stopped eating the bugs all together, even the yummy wormies, which worried me. He would only eat his raw food at this point, but I noticed it was affecting his gut. His poop was slightly tinged with green, so I gave him some pro kolin to help restore his gut health. This really helped.

Then in the last months he just stopped eating his raw cubes, I was devastated. His walking deteriorated, he was wobbling everywhere like a dothery old man. It was at this point I started offering him critical care. This is a powder that you mix with warm water that is full of protein and vitamins. If hogs are really ill it can be syringe fed. Thankfully Bramble loved his "soup" and happily lapped it up. It made him more active and steady on his feet, his weight stabilised again. I gave him two feeds to begin with, one in the morning and one at night as he liked his soup warm. When he was only able to eat small amounts I increased this to three times a day. Please note critical care should only be given briefly when recovering from illness or for elderly hogs as it causes fatty liver.

When is the right time to help them over the rainbow bridge? Base it on quality of life. Continue to adapt their heating, diet, medical care for as long as you can to help prolong their lives. I honestly believe the care I lavished on Bramble gave him an additional six months.

I hope this post helps people with their prickly OAP's, at the end of the day, all they need is a little extra TLC.