



LET'S TALK ABOUT  
**HOW MUCH  
SHOULD MY APH  
WEIGH?**

AN APH CARE GUIDE

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By Happy Quills

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# SONIC'S SLIM DOWN - HOW MUCH SHOULD MY APH WEIGH?

A common question is "How much should my hedgehog weigh?". The answer is a little more complex. Whilst no hedgehog should leave its mum between 6-8 weeks weighing less than 180g, there is no set weight a hedgehog should weigh after this point. Like humans, hedgehogs come in all shapes and sizes, which shall be explained in this article. However, with African Pygmy Hedgehogs being a vets no.2 exotic pet for obesity, it is certainly important to try and maintain a healthy weight from the off set.



LOW WEIGHT

No hoglet should leave mum before 180g. The next aim is to get your hog to weigh over 300g. Hogs can lose weight quickly so 300g is the recommended minimum. Having said that, some small petite hogs struggle to hit that figure, which is why hog shape can sometimes be a better way to assess a hog's health. The recommended maximum weight is 500/600g, 600g being the absolute top maximum. I myself own a hog that averages about 550g, he is not fat, he is just a lot longer than the average hog in length. The average hog is six -eight inches in length for comparison.



SPRINTER/RUNNER

The best way to assess if your hedgehog is over or under weight is to look at them from above. The ideal hog shape is described as either a tear drop shape or a pear (.). If your hog's sides turn inwards ) (then your hog is underweight. Avid runners can have a straight body shape || but they can still be perfectly healthy this shape, it's just they burn off more fat and as such will need their diet adapted. A simple way to assess if your hog is overweight is to put them on their back, if they cannot fully ball up without showing some tummy then they are overweight.

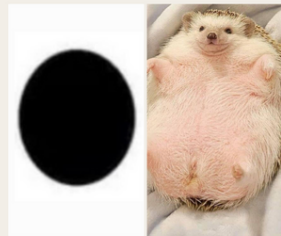


IDEAL WEIGHT

Once they reach adulthood, at a year old, a healthy hedgehog's weight should only fluctuate by 10-20g. It is important to weigh your hedgehog weekly and at a similar time so their weight recordings are more accurate. I often wait until my hogs have toileted, as a big poop can make a big difference in weight. When your hedgehog has reached their healthy weight, by assessing from shape, then the next step is maintaining that weight. Any weight loss should be gradual. If weight loss is greater than 30 grams in two consecutive weeks and nothing has changed in either their diet or behaviour then your hedgehog needs a trip to the vets. Hoglets should only ever be gaining weight, they should never be losing it. Two consecutive days of even a few grams of weight loss must be investigated immediately and three consecutive days of weight loss will need an urgent vet appointment. Weight loss is often the only symptom of a serious condition only your vet will be able to diagnose. Weighing your hedgehog weekly may seem over the top, but they are very good at hiding pain and illness, unexpected weight loss is a good indication that something is amiss.



OVER WEIGHT



OBESE

A healthy hog should be offered a tablespoon of kibble and a mix of bugs each night. The protein of kibble should be 30-35%, but fat content a mix of 10-15%.

Avid runners will benefit from more exoskeleton bugs, so feeding them worms, crickets, locusts, isopods or roaches every day will be a great addition to their healthy hedgehog diet. The best insects to feed for a higher fat content are mealworms, morio worms, and wax worms. Their kibble should be made from a mix of at least three - five different brands, the protein in their kibble needs to be 30-35%, but the fat content should be around 13-15%.

Underweight/hogs that struggle to maintain weight/older hogs all benefit from a kibble that again has 30-35% protein, but has a fat content of 15-20% to help them stay within the healthy range.

You can spot an overweight hedgehog from its shape. It will not be able to ball fully, so some of their belly fur will still be showing. There may be fatty deposits located in its eyes, under its chin, on the knees, and yellow rolls of fat in the arm pits, some hogs get a roll of fat around their necks behind their head making their quills bumpy. Often when walking over weight hedgehogs will waddle and often struggle rolling from their back to their belly again. Overweight hedgehogs are also more susceptible to urine

burn as their belly drags along the ground, as well as small cysts in areas such as arm pits. They are also more likely to get fatty liver disease and cardiovascular and joint issues. So those big chubby hogs posted over social media, although very cute, should not be encouraged as they are extremely unhealthy.

An overweight hedgehog should not have its food restricted. Just like its counterparts it should be offered a tablespoon of kibble a night and low fat bugs, 'occasional insects' and 'treat insects' from the guides should be very limited. This type of hog needs a high protein kibble with fat 10-13%.

Hogs are very fussy and will often refuse to eat new kibble, especially if it is low fat. It is best to blend the new kibble with their old to begin with. However, they are very selective eaters and will often pick out their favourites and leave the lower fat kibble. A little bit of flaxseed oil on the low fat kibble tends to encourage them to eat it. It will take a week or two before your hedgehog adapts to their new food. Do not keep trying new foods, stick with the same ones and be resilient.

Overweight hogs often do not wheel, they need to be encouraged to exercise. A larger, wider wheel such as a tic tac wheel is most recommended, as they are less likely to fall off. Snuffle mats are a great way of hiding kibble / bugs so that your hog really has to work for its food. A play pen for exploring also helps with exercise, fill it with tunnels, tubes, crinkle balls, forage boxes, a wheel. Free roaming is another option. A bio- active enclosure with dirt, plants, self sustaining bugs etc could also promote more exercise as they hunt for food. Holding bugs with tongs in front of your hog will encourage it to move to collect its reward.

Early studies have shown that CBD oil/ hemp oil can also be used to help with metabolism. As full studies have not yet been completed its use is entirely at an owners discretion. This should be 1500 mg pet hemp oil and a max of one drop a day on their food. As well as improving metabolism Cannabidiol can off-set conditions caused by being overweight such as muscle aches or low energy levels. Using 1 drop of the suggested 1500mg formula per day could increase mobility, therefore make them more active and exercise more. Before giving cbd to your hog it is advisable to speak to your vet. Side effects of cbd can be loss of appetite, diarrhoea, dry mouth, and can alter effectiveness of other medications. Your vet needs to weigh up (no pun intended) the benefits against the risk for each individual hog.

The secret to weight loss is slow and steady. Hogs should not be losing large amounts on a frequent basis. For example, an extremely obese hog at 1kg may lose 30g in the first week, but it is not healthy to consistently lose this amount of weight week after week. The below veterinary table gives the ideal safe weight loss each week depending on your hogs weight.

<b>WEIGHT</b>	<b>HEALTHY WEIGHT LOSS PER WEEK</b>
600g	10g
700g	11g
750g	12g
800g	13g
850g	14g
900g	15g
1kg	16g



The ideal shape of a hedgehog should be similar to a pear, avocado or tear drop.