



LET'S TALK ABOUT

# TENREC TORPOR

A TENREC CARE  
GUIDE

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# TENREC TORPOR

Tenrecs are not as sensitive to temperature changes the same way hedgehogs are. However, they do go through a type of hibernation once a year called torpor. Torpor is a natural part of a tenrec's life. Torpor is also called brumation and will happen in the colder months, typically beginning Sept/Oct until March/April. Torpor will still occur in captivity even if kept at a constant temperature (22°C - 26°C) and with a light cycle.

As torpor begins, you will notice your tenrec eating and moving less. You are still fine to handle them during this time and when they awaken by the warmth of your hands you may be able to encourage them to eat a small amount, but it is not unusual for them to stop eating entirely for patches of this time. They will be moving slower and be far less active than during the summer months. Their body temperature will be lower than during their active months, with a belly that is cold to the touch. Unlike with hogs, you do not need to panic if their belly is cold, this is perfectly normal in torpor. Due to the energy torpor uses up, it is better to let them simply sleep on you if you want to handle them. Do not try to force them to be more active unless there are health concerns. Males often have a lighter torpor than females, so may have more patches of activity of waking to eat and drink. Even so, this will be in much smaller amounts than during the active months. Due to them sleeping so much during torpor, if they do come out to eat you must make sure they do not fall asleep with food in their mouths because that can cause tooth issues and other health issues. Most females will not wake up for a month straight or more at a time, a girl needs her beauty sleep.

It is important to monitor your tenrec's weight before and during torpor - especially if it is their first one. Some owners keep young tenrecs at a higher temperature than adults to ensure a light torpor, ensuring the tenrecs wake up and eat. Tenrecs' weight can range very widely, with 110-200g considered a healthy range depending on the animal. You want to make sure you are taking them out at least once a week to weigh them and track their weight to make sure they are not losing too much weight. They will always lose some weight during torpor because they are burning calories and fat for energy to get through torpor, similar to how bears get through hibernation. Baby tenrecs should try to be discouraged/prevented from going into full torpor their first torpor. This is because most babies are not big enough/ don't weigh enough to successfully go through a full torpor and tend to drop too much weight during torpor if allowed to fully go through torpor in their first year. So keeping babies at around 23-24 degrees during the colder months is best to try to discourage their bodies from going into a full torpor.

When they are coming out of torpor they may occasionally have a cold belly, this is not to be alarming, it just means they're a little chilly, but it is not harmful to their health. So long as they are kept about 21-22C when out of torpor they should be fine, babies should be kept a bit warmer, 23-24C at least. Tenrecs will often come out of torpor with flaky skin. Offering them a chinchilla sand bath lets them rub away their dry skin, some owners put in rougher branches at this point so that they can give themselves a good rub down. Dry skin is usually resolved by the sand baths, but a drop of flaxseed oil can be added to their food if it is not clearing up.

For those used to torpor being a danger in other exotics, torpor in tenrecs can be rather stressful initially. It is important however not to discourage them from entering this state, as it is not known how preventing them from this natural rhythm would impact on health and life expectancy.



Dry skin from torpor