



LET'S TALK ABOUT

GOLDEN OLDIES

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.

This little fella is my hog Bramble, he is 2 months shy of his 4th birthday, and I'm really hoping he is going to make it as his health has been going downhill since August last year, all my fingers and toes are crossed.

The first signs that something was wrong with 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.



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 weigh Bramble weekly to ensure he is 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 last month 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 loves his "soup" and happily laps it up. It has made him more active and steady on his feet, his weight has stabilised. Now I give him two feeds, one in the morning and one at night as he likes his soup warm The other night I even found a small pewp on the wheel and he has not been wheeling for over 6 months.

At the moment he is stable, you can visually see he is an OAP now, he is slow but his quality of life is still there. I will continue to adapt his heating, diet, medical care for as long as I can to help prolong his life.

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.