



BS3 Hedgehog Project: Support Feeding

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Support **feeding** hedgehogs is a great way to give them a helping hand. Although their natural diet of bugs and insects is best, with the insect population sadly declining, support feeding can give hedgehogs that extra boost, especially in the autumn and winter months.

Natural Diet

Hedgehogs are opportunistic foragers and will eat a wide range bugs and insects, such as beetles, caterpillars, worms, slugs, earwigs, millipedes and fly larvae. They don't have great eye sight, so they use their sense of smell and hearing to hunt these bugs out! They will occasionally snuffle out other food such as fallen fruit, eggs, frogs, baby rodents and even carrion (meat from already dead animals).

You can encourage creepy crawlies to your garden with a log pile, rockery, insect hotel, wild area, pond, leaf pile/leaf mulch cage, compost heap or plant some insect friendly wild flowers!

Support Feeding

Additional to their natural diet, you can offer:

- ✓ Meat based wet cat or dog food in jelly (they tend not to like fish flavour).
- ✓ Dry Cat/Kitten biscuits.
- ✓ Purpose made hedgehog food (e.g. Brambles, Spike's).
- ✓ Always put out fresh water too!
- ✓ Use shallow bowls (such as a plant pot saucer) as hedgehogs like to get into the bowl for a proper snuffle and can often tip them over if the sides are too high.

Do NOT feed:

- ✗ *Milk (as they lactose intolerant).*
- ✗ *Bread (as this contains no nutritional value).*
- ✗ *Peanuts (as these get stuck in their teeth and cause decay).*
- ✗ *Mealworms – this is a controversial topic! A couple won't hurt, but they are believed to cause metabolic bone disease if consumed in high quantities, especially in hoglets who's bones are still developing. They also LOVE mealworms (hedgehog junk food!) and will chose to eat them over anything*

else – so if your neighbours are also support feeding the hedgehog might just go to every garden only eating mealworms, which results in a very unbalanced diet! So overall its best to avoid them.

When to support feed

- Start feeding from **spring** when they emerge from hibernation as they will be very hungry and have lost a lot of weight over the winter.
- You can feed right through **summer** but most importantly provide fresh water as it is an important lifeline during hot/dry spells.
- During **autumn**, when the insect populations start to decline, support feeding is of the most benefit to build up their fat reserves – they need to be over about 600g to survive hibernation.
- Over **winter** most hedgehogs will be hibernating, but the exact time hibernation begins varies with temperature. You will notice when they stop visiting, so can stop regular feeding then. However, hedgehogs can come out of hibernation temporarily during the winter if there are mild spells, so leaving out some water and dry cat biscuits during mild winter weather can be a great help to a hungry and thirsty hog!

Build a Feeding Station

A feeding station is a great way to prevent other animals such as cats or foxes getting to the food!

- Use a sturdy wooden or plastic box with a removable lid. Plastic storage tubs, or wooden crates make good feeding stations.
- Cut a 13cm x 13cm entrance hole – cover any sharp edges.
- Make an entrance tunnel, create internal dividers or make a brick maze to prevent larger animals squeezing inside.
- Line with newspaper – they are messy!
- A shallow water dish at the entrance can stop cats getting in (as cats don't like getting their paws wet!).
- Weigh the lid down with a brick to prevent other animals opening up!
- Clean your feeding station out regularly.
- Clean the bowls regularly (separate from your own plates and bowls).
- Additionally, you could place a wildlife camera or hedgehog footprint tunnel near your station to document your visitors! The BS3HP has some hedgehog tunnels available to borrow!

Links:

www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/feed-hedgehogs/



www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/feeding/



<https://littlesilverhedgehog.com/2016/06/20/hedgehog-feeding-station/>



www.littlesilverhedgehog.com

www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/openahedgehogcafe/

BS3 Hedgehog Champion Feeding Station - Hall of Fame!





