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Hedgehogs & Tenrecs
Who They Are and How They are Different

Gioia Kerlin

If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it must be a duck, right? Well, only sometimes. African hedgehogs and both the greater and lesser tenrecs of Madagascar (setifer setosus and echinos telfairi, respectively) are quite similar in appearance. All are small, spiny, insectivorous mammals. They are all primarily nocturnal, they have small, beady eyes, and they can (in some species of tenrecs, anyway) roll into a protective ball when threatened. But they are not the same animal, nor are they all that similar genetically.

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According to americazoo.com, our beloved little hedge-friends and their spiny counterparts the tenrecs are both members of the order Insectivora, along with shrews, moles, moonrats and colugos. Recently however, the scientific community has revisited this taxonomy and has proposed different classifications based on genetic criteria like molecular and DNA sequence analysis, rather than shared physical characteristics. Most recent research places moonrats, shrews and colugos into separate orders. Golden moles and all species of tenrecs are now included within a grouping, or clade, that includes other animals such as elephants, hyraxes and possibly, aardvarks. This clade is known as Afrotheria (Afro meaning Africa, and -theria meaning animal in Greek), which is considered a superorder. It is further narrowed down to Afroinsectiphilia (Afromeaning Africa again, and -insectiphilia, meaning insectivore).

According to this taxonomic system, our little hedge-friends belong to the clade Laurasiatheria (“Laurasia”- referring to the super continent of Laurasia, and -theria meaning animal) and are not considered to be close relatives of any species of tenrec. In fact, hedgehogs and tenrecs have evolved in isolation from each other. No hedgehog can be considered endemic to areas that tenrecs naturally inhabit, and vice versa.

Cladistics, the hierarchical classification of species based on evolutionary ancestry, is considered by some to be controversial. It is built upon evolutionary theory rather than perceived similarities and differences between species so it is quite possible that it is a much more accurate way of categorizing organisms. For example, just because a fossa (a Malagasy alpha-predator) looks like a cat does not make it a feline. A fossa is actually from the family Eupleridae and is much more closely related to the mongoose. So looks can be deceiving.

“Tenrec” (tenrecidae) is a term used to refer to a family of approximately 30 different species of animals. Some like the setifers and the echinops appear to be very similar to our African hedgehogs. Some tenrec species are carnivorous rather than insectivorous and are aquatic with soft, dense fur and long flat tails (Potamogale velox). Others have spines that, like those of a porcupine, are released when a predator touches them (hemicentetes semispinosus), while some individuals of the tenrec ecaudatus species are basically bald. Some tenrecs are arboreal, some live in piles of debris and leaves, and others must live near the water. Some live for only two years; others have a lifespan of 14 years or more. “Tenrec”, therefore, is a very generic grouping that refers to many diverse species.

Some people think that tenrecs and hedgehogs are distant cousins. I would have to disagree. I, for example, have more genetic information in common with a chimpanzee than tenrecs do with hedgehogs. These animals are truly “apples and oranges.” In this article, I’ll be talking primarily about the tenrecs that are commonly kept by hedgehog lovers: The greater hedgehog tenrec (setifer setosus) and the lesser hedgehog tenrec (echinops telfairi).

Besides their DNA, tenrecs are different from African hedgehogs in other ways. They have obvious physical differences. While hedgehogs have small, paddy feet, setifers and echinops have larger, graspy feet and distinctly articulated “fingers” that they use for climbing and making their way through the underbrush. That is because setifers are semi-arboreal and echinops are fully arboreal. In fact, once either species of these little guys grabs hold of your hand or arm, it can be difficult to extract them! Other visible differences are their eyes. Hedgehogs have larger, more beady eyes while setifers and echinops have hardly any eyes at all. That leads us to the next difference—whiskers. Hedgehogs have relatively short whiskers, somewhat like those of a cat. But setifers and echinops have crazy-long whiskers that point in all directions and help compensate for their visual deficiencies. These crazy little hairs help tenrecs feel where they are and find where they want to go. In addition to these sensitive hairs, some scientists have speculated that echinops telfairi use echolocation in the form of clicks to navigate their world. These clicks are inaudible to humans. If you hold a lesser tenrec very still and observe the ears, you will see them constantly twitching and circulating back and forth so perhaps there is a basis for this theory. Another difference is their tails. While hedgehogs have cute little pink, vestigial tails, greater and lesser tenrecs have only bumps on their bottoms.

The biggest physical difference between African hedgehogs and both echinops telfairi and setifer setosus has to do with the anus and urogenital tracts. Whereas hedge-
Hedgehogs and tenrecs also have distinct seasonal habits, ways of protecting themselves, and personality traits that are different. While hedgehogs will most often roll into a ball and pop and hiss to discourage an intruder, setifiers will generally face the threat head on, mouth wide open and teeth bared. Their philosophy is that the best defense is a good offense. This method of self-protection can make setifiers somewhat “bitey.” Not all of them share this tendency; some of them are gentle, amiable “cupcakes” that don’t care if you cover their faces with kisses. But there are individuals who are unpredictable and can draw blood faster than you can say “ouch!” These individuals are often best handled with gloves. But in general, a person just needs to be aware of the animals’ personalities and handle them with due respect. Personally, I handle all my setifiers with bare hands except when trimming toenails. That is the only time I use gloves and I have found through experience that it is a wise choice. As for echinops, they normally do not bite much at all. When they are frightened, their response is to run full speed away from whatever has scared them. This makes it somewhat tricky to control them in unfamiliar situations. These animals can run very, very fast, and are so small that the threat of losing them forever is great. I allow all my pokey-pets, except for the echinops, to free range in their bedroom. They are so small, flexible and fast they could disappear in the blink of an eye. Nevertheless in general terms, tenrecs are calmer than hedgehogs. They have a slower heartbeat and habituate more quickly to human interaction.

Unlike hedgehogs, setifer setosus and echinops telfairi both go through torpor, an annual period of reduced activity, metabolism and food consumption. Torpor is not true hibernation because the animal wakes up to eat, drink and play, just not as often as normal. Torpor is not well understood by scientists. Those of us who keep and/or breed tenrecs have noticed a great degree of variation in our animals’ torpor patterns. Typically, torpor occurs in the colder months. For my animals, it normally begins some time in October, reaches its peak during late December through February, and then ends completely between March and May. Other people have noticed that their animals become torpid in the summer months (which would be winter months in Madagascar).

Tenrecs can be fussy eaters at the best of times but often refuse all food except for insects while in torpor. Some animals go through a deeper torpor phase than do others. An interesting fact about lesser tenrecs is that they go through a daily phase of lower and higher body temperatures in addition to their annual torpor. During the day, their bodies are cool, even cold, to the touch and they can act somewhat slow and dopey. At night, they warm up and become more alert and active. In the book *The Tenrecs: A Study in Mammalian Behavior and Evolution*, J.F. Eisenberg and Edwin Gould cite daytime body temperatures in echinops as 24-28 C (75.2-82.4 F), and late afternoon temperatures of 27.5-37 C (81.5-98.6 F). Echinops’ bodies reach their maximum temperatures at around midnight according to this research. This does not happen with setifers as far as we know.

Another big difference between hedgehogs and tenrecs is that both setifers and echinops will secrete a milky white liquid from their eyes when they are in an unknown environment. They smear this liquid on things around them by rubbing their faces on objects like a cat will do. This is normal and does not mean that the animal is possessed! It seems to happen more in the late spring and summer months when they are more active.
It also seems that males do it more often than females. Although at least in setifers, the girls still secrete this “milk” but to a lesser degree. The secretion is a little messy but doesn’t hurt anything. Many tennies will most likely need to bathe themselves after rubbing on things. They are very cute when they take a bath! They will either lie on their backs or sit up like squirrels, licking their hands and wiping their faces.

Last, although both hedgehogs and tenrecs self-anoint, they do it in different ways. Hedgehogs, as we all know, lick something they are interested in, work up a mouth full of foamy saliva, and then spread this saliva all over themselves by contorting and licking their backs, sides and heads. Tenrecs are less messy. Tennies will sniff and lick things that interest them but, instead of foaming at the mouth like Linda Blair, they rub their little hands in the substance and pat it onto their backs and flanks.

So, as you can see, tenrecs and hedgehogs may look very similar but they are very different. They are both wonderful, fascinating animals. It is a privilege to know and care for them both but their genetics, personalities, physiology, instincts, and annual phases make them completely different animals. One can’t help but feel lucky to know both of them up close and personal!

Final note: I would also like to mention that some tenrecs are endangered species and their natural habitat is threatened daily by commercial activities in Madagascar.
Well, summer is almost upon us and hopefully we'll see some sun and warmer weather real soon. I just wanted to take the time to remind everyone about leaving pets in cars in the warm weather. It literally takes only a few minutes for an animal to be overcome by the heat in a car, even with the window open just a crack. So please, be good to your animals. If you have to get out of the car, take them with you. If that's not possible, leave them home.

Don't forget that a lot of very short-haired breeds of dogs can very easily become sunburned. So if you have one of these dogs, apply some sunscreen before letting your pet out and try to limit time in the sun.

If you see an unaccompanied dog in a car on a warm day, watch it for a few minutes to see if someone comes to the car. If not, call the police. If the animal seems to be in any kind of distress, by all means call 911. They must get the animal out of the vehicle even if it means breaking a window to do it.

Every month, Maisey travels the world to find the latest and greatest in fashions for hedgies and is showcasing her finds here in Maisey's Costume Corner.

Send your pictures to hedgiemom@comcast.net

Kibibi and Anais Kerlin are waiting in their ice cream cone bowls for some yummy treats!
HWS Wheel-a-Thon a Big Success

By Linda Woodring

On February 2, Hedgehog Day, the Hedgehog Welfare Society again held its "annual" Wheel-a-Thon after a one year absence. Ten teams of hedgehogs participated to raise money for the HWS by collecting pledges for their running that night. In all, they raised $1,619. So congratulations to everyone.

Below are the ten teams, how much they raised and the prizes they received for their efforts. Good work kids!!!!!

1. The Quilled Friends team    $550  Beaded necklace donated by Vicki McLean, stuffed hedgehog donated by Dawn Wrobel, hedgehog note pad donated by Dawn Wrobel

2. Wizard & Baxter              $325  Wheel donated by *Hog Wheels by Chet*, bookends donated by Dawn Wrobel, stuffed hedgehog donated by Dawn Wrobel

3. Sir Snuffy's team            $200  Wheel, blanket and hat donated by Helen Justis, stuffed hedgehog donated by Dawn Wrobel

4. Winceston                    $195  Exercise ball donated by *Pets Etc.*, hedgehog candle donated by Dawn Wrobel

5. Q-Ball                       $95   Hedgehog door stop donated by Naomi Wikane, Hedgehog Day tee shirt donated by Dawn Wrobel

6. Nimue, Merryweather, & Tulahbelle    $76  Hedgehog candle and towel donated by Dawn Wrobel

7. Team Hedgie Haven            $75   Hedgehog mug and note cube donated by Dawn Wrobel

8. Ouija                        $75   Hedgehog mug and towel donated by Dawn Wrobel

9. Leonidas                     $15   Hedgehog stickers donated by Dawn Wrobel

10. Quilliam & Stormy           $13   Hedgehog stickers donated by Dawn Wrobel

In addition, all teams received a certificate of appreciation suitable for framing, and those raising at least $75 received a 2008 Wheel-a-Thon tee shirt designed by Judie Peters.

Wheel-a-Thon tee shirts are available to anyone who did not raise the requisite $75 or who did not participate in the Wheel-a-Thon this year. They may be purchased through Judie Peters’ *Cafe Press* store.

Thank you to everyone who participated, to those that made pledges, and to everyone who was kind enough to donate prizes for the participants. Together you helped a lot of hedgies and, hopefully, had some fun doing it!
The Midwest Rendezvous Hedgehog Show, April 26, 2008
By Greta Weaver

Nine humans and five hedgies gathered for the first Midwest Rendezvous Hedgehog show here in Milwaukee on Saturday April 26th. Floyd Aprill was the show organizer and judge. Four of the nine humans were very new to our world. They had an excellent opportunity to ask as many questions as they wanted of the five “experienced” folks in attendance. In fact, Pina’s Dad, Greg, thought he had a little girl hedge. When someone pointed out that Pina was a boy and explained why, he said, “I thought that was a belly button.” After some laughter he was told that we hedgies don’t have belly buttons. All us girls thought it was all rather funny and we had a good giggle over it.

A sanctioned conformation show was held, followed by a break for lunch, and then two sports games. We didn’t stay for these so I can’t tell you about them. But I am so proud to tell you all that my big sister Molly took home the Best of Show ribbon!! She was so excited; she still hasn’t stopped talking about it. Listed below are the conformation show results. We hope to see more of you in attendance at the next Midwest Rendezvous show in April of 2009.

Juvenile male
Pinto
Pina (Greg Gosdeck) - 1st

Juvenile male grand champion
Pina

Adult male
Apricot
Sid (Lois Reitz) - 1st

Adult male grand champion
Sid

Adult female
Standard
Greta (Deb Weaver) - 1st

Apricot
Sunbeam (Lois Reitz) - 2nd
Molly (Deb Weaver) - 1st

Adult female grand/reserve champion:
Molly - grand champion
Greta - reserve grand champion

Best of show table
Pina
Sid (Reserve Best of Show)
Molly (Best of Show)
Hedgisms: Folk Customs Relating to Hedgehogs
(Caution: Parts of this article are not for the squeamish)

Hedgehogs are unusual little animals who are found in many different countries throughout the world. Perhaps because of their spiny appearance, many superstitions have been attached to hedgehogs.

The hedgie’s huffing and clicking, a noise hedgie owners know and love, once caused those who heard it to assume that ghosts and evil spirits were lurking about. In Yorkshire, England, witches were commonly believed to disguise themselves as hedgehogs! It was possible to identify witch-hedgehogs because they would run as fast as a hare and could never be caught or shot.

Killing a hedgehog was supposed to ward off bad luck. This unfortunate superstition may have come about because it was commonly believed that hedgehogs were capable of suckling the milk from dairy cattle during the night! If you read the article about J.G. Wood in an earlier issue of this newsletter, you may recall an anecdote that was presented as a factual account of this very activity! A hedgehog entering the home was also considered a bad omen even though some people actually invited hedgehogs into their homes to assist in removing cockroaches from their kitchens.

The English expression, ‘Off we go again, as the Hedgehog said to the Devil’, is explained by the following Herefordshire folktale:

A hedgehog once wagered he could outrun the Devil in racing up and down a ditch at night. He curled himself up at one end, while a second hedgehog did likewise at the other; the Devil rushed to and fro, but at either end of the ditch he always found a hedgehog there, saying ‘Off we go again!’ Eventually, the Devil dropped dead with exhaustion. (Leather, 357)

Another quaint European tradition claimed that if a pregnant woman had the misfortune to step on a hedgehog, she would give birth to a hedgehog! On the other hand, in East Africa the skin and spines of hedgehogs were used as fertility charms. Rubbing seeds against a hedgehog was thought to promote an abundant harvest!

There are also a surprising number of superstitions relating to (shudder!) the consumption of hedgehogs. Warriors in Madagascar, for example, were once forbidden to eat hedgehog flesh for fear that they, too, might curl up in fright when attacked! Gypsies, however, used hedgehog flesh as a cure for seizures.

In Morocco, schoolboys were once fed pounded, roasted hedgehog livers as a means of strengthening their memories. The same people who resorted to this desperate measure also hung hedgehog jawbones around the necks of their offspring to protect them from the evil eye! Other parts had distinct medicinal uses: The blood was used to treat warts, the gall (bile) to treat deafness and the fumes of burnt hedgehog quills were thought to have health benefits. In 17th century England, the remedy for insomnia was the left eye of a hedgehog fried in oil!!

How lucky we are to recognize that the true value of a hedgehog is based not on the liver, the quills or the jawbone but on personality and the companionship the hedgie has to offer.

Sources:


Welcome New Rescue Contact!
The following individual has become an active rescue contact, opening her heart and home to hedgies in need.

Gina Disteldorf, Texas

If you are interested in becoming a rescue contact, simply write to Sheila at SexyTexy@comcast.net for an application.

Thank you for your support!
Sheila and Cyndy

MAY
May 1   Bucky Junior Wrobel
May 10  Wizard Woodring
May 10  Angus McLean
May 10  Lucy Kregear
May 10  Esmirelda Wrobel
May 19  Greta Weaver
May 24  Babette Storm
May 25  Pepper Storm
May 31  Noodles Ophoff

JUNE
Jun 11  Piglet Muckenfuss
Jun 14  Little Frogger Graesser
Jun 15  Eclipse Storm
Jun 20  Caramel Fleming
Jun 21  Nimue Kocunik
With Mother’s day approaching, this is a special month to celebrate our special status as Hedgie-Moms (or Hedgie-Dads), as we parent and nurture our quilled little kids. On Sunday, May 11, some of us will also celebrate our motherhood to our human little ones. The mothers amongst us have the privilege and responsibility of raising the next generation of hedgie guardians. Being a parent of hedgies and a parent of human kids at the same time presents unique challenges, as well as unique opportunities for the enrichment of both sets of kids.

I was going to wind up this article with a contribution from Cindy DeLaRosa, but her story is so powerful, I decided to place it at the beginning of the article instead. Cindy’s family is a great example of the mutually beneficial experience of raising kids and hedgies together. Her words will bring tears to your eyes! Here is Cindy’s story:

“It was my youngest son Derick that brought me into the wonderful world of hedgehogs. I have a lot of allergies that trigger my asthma, so pets were out of the question. When Rick was eight, he came home from school all excited because his teacher had a hedgehog that she shared with her class. He was thrilled to let me know that hedgehogs are non-allergy pets, could we get one? Being a single mom, the cost of a hedgehog was not in our budget. Rick was a bit disheartened and then came up with a brilliant idea. Could Santa bring him a hedgehog? Santa could do anything, right?

So of course Santa came through. My older boys were pretty much out of the house at that time and they thought the rest of us were just a bit nuts. Rick was totally responsible for our first hedgehog, Vincent. He had to keep his room clean in order for him to keep Vincent in there. I let him know that Vincent couldn't possibly survive in the cluttered mess that Rick called his room. Rick did a wonderful job of taking care of Vincent and his room, with very minimal nagging from his mom. We feel now that Vincent had WHS, although we didn't know what it was at the time. When she could no longer eat on her own, I took over her care. I should add here that Vincent hated me. She bit me every chance she got, whether I was holding her or not. Rick was her favorite person. She spent hours and hours snuggling in his lap. She stayed with us for four years.

After Vincent died, our search for another hedgie, lead us to the Internet and the Hedgehog Welfare Society. We found out about shows. The boys and I started saving our change so we could go. We grew closer as a family having a common goal. Adam and Rick both showed hedgies. Although Adam was still in high school at the time, he generally did most of the driving on the way home. Rick turned into a wonderful map reader.

When I ended up hand-feeding the new born fat girls, my boys were so much help. I couldn't have done it without them. For the first ten days, I was feeding the babies every two hours. I took them to work with me so I could feed them during the day. That made a much longer work day for me. My boys were cleaning house, fixing dinner, keeping up with homework while I slept. They also, woke me up every two hours so I could feed the girls.

Of course their self-confidence and self esteem were boosted by the responsibility of caring for hedgehogs and all that it entailed. By having hedgehogs in our lives my boys have learned many things beyond the commitment of caring for a pet for it's entire life. They know that life isn't always full of roses, if pets get sick, you take care of them anyway. They learned the joy of unconditional love and the sorrow of digging your best friend's grave. They know how to plan and save for something, nothing is out of their reach. They meet strangers and offer to help.

I have learned that I don't have to do everything myself. My boys have learned responsibility by caring for another life. I know they will come through when life gets tough. I know they will be wonderful fathers. They have rubbed the bellies of baby hedgies to make them potty so I'm sure diapers will be a cinch. Because of the rescues we have taken in, my sons also know not everyone has learned the lessons they have.”

**PREGNANCY**

Cindy’s story illustrates the amazing double-blessing that kids and hedgies can bring to a family. I’ll follow up with some more pragmatic advice on how to handle the co-demands of kids and hedgies, beginning at the very beginning – pregnancy.

It all starts out with a twinkle in our eye! Then the double-pink line and the elation that a new member will be joining your family. Next, comes constant nausea, utter exhaustion, loose joints, feet swollen beyond recognition, Braxton-Hicks contractions, and bed rest. It’s an enormous challenge to go through all the physical and emotional turmoil of pregnancy, while remaining diligent with the routines of cage cleaning, wheel-scrubbing, and allotting ample snuggle time for our hedgies.

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Morning sickness – ugh! I’ve never thought mealies looked particularly appetizing but when I was pregnant with my first son, morning sickness made it almost impossible for me to go near anything wormie. One whiff of that jar of freeze-dried wax worms had me gagging and the sight of a wiggling worm could literally make me barf. Don’t even mention a poopy wheel!

Another common concern is toxoplasmosis. At the very first OB appointment, some pamphlet or nurse told you “don’t go near kitty litter while you are pregnant.” It is true that cats (primarily outdoor cats) can carry the toxoplasmosis parasite, which can possibly be transmitted to a pregnant mom, and might lead to miscarriage or serious birth defects in the fetus. However, cats acquire toxoplasmosis from eating contaminated raw meat, birds, mice, or soil – none of which are likely to be included in the diet of our hedgehogs. According to the Humane Society of the United States, cats are the only species of animal to shed the infections stage of toxoplasmosis in their feces. I have searched the zoology literature and although there are published cases of toxoplasmosis in wild European hedgehogs, I found no reported cases of toxoplasmosis infection in pet African hedgehogs. DISCLAIMER: I would never say that it is impossible for a pet African hedgehog to be infected with toxoplasmosis, just that it is unlikely. The risks can be further minimized by never feeding raw meat to your hedgehogs and using proper hygiene (see tips #3 and #4 on the list below).

Occasionally, the HWS is asked to re-home hedgehogs by pregnant moms who feel too overwhelmed to continue caring for their hedgehogs. But, as the Humane Society of the United States says, “it is possible to have a baby, without giving up your other babies” (in this case your hedgehogs). The following list is a summary of advice given on the yahoo groups over the years in regards to human pregnancy and hedgehog care:

1) **Plan ahead.** If you are in a situation where you are trying to get pregnant and you think animal-care will be a problem for you during pregnancy, do not take in more animals than you can handle. Think ahead! It’s just not fair to take animals into your family, if you anticipate that you will pass off the quilled kids when your wish for a human baby comes true.

2) **Pregnancy is not a handicap.** Yes, there are difficult pregnancies, but the majority of pregnancies are healthy and do not require extreme physical restriction, especially in the early months. It may take extra effort, but it is usually possible to keep up with hedge care while pregnant, so don’t panic!

3) **Use proper hygiene.** Proper hygiene practices should be followed whether pregnant or not, but it’s probably best to use extra precaution when pregnant. Wear protective gloves any time you will be cleaning hedgehog feces. If you are concerned about topical parasites, wear gloves when handling your hedgehogs. Always sanitize your hands before and after handling your hedgehogs.

4) **For better or for worse.** Your husband promised to be there for you “in sickness and in health.” That covers morning sickness. Now is his time to come through on that promise. If you are feeling too yucky to clean cages or handle hedgehog food, enlist the help of your hubby. If you are uncomfortable handling hedgehog feces, tell him that cage-cleaning is good practice for diaper duty.

5) **Friends, family, neighbors, pet-sitters.** The reality is that some husbands are just stubborn doofuses when it comes to hedgehog care. But, if you absolutely cannot take care of your hedge and your husband absolutely won’t do it, find someone who will help. If your mother-in-law comes over to help with an older child, ask her if she can check on the hedgehogs’ food and water. If you have an older child, perhaps he/she can handle some hedgehog care. When I was on bed rest and my hubby was out of town, we took advantage of a neighbor kid, who cared for all our animals (including hedgehogs) for $50.00 a week. That is a drop in the bucket compared to what formula and diapers will cost. Consider it a necessary expense of child-rearing.
6) **Minimal care strategy.** A hedgie isn’t a dog who needs to go for two walks a day. Although it certainly isn’t ideal, you can temporarily get away with clean food and water, spot-cleaning, and a good wheel scrub a couple of times a week. I’m not advocating letting your cages get nasty but, if necessary, put in the minimal effort required to keep the cages livable.

7) **Bed rest.** Of course, without question, if you are on bed rest, you absolutely cannot, under any circumstances, get out of bed and clean cages or feed hedgies. In this case, you are going to need to rely on the above tips. On the other hand, bed rest can be boring and lonely, and hedgie-snuggling is a great way to pass that time! When I was on bed rest at home, I constantly had a hedgie in a sack next to me. When I was on bed rest in the hospital, I missed my hedgies like crazy. In either case, it is an absolute necessity to recruit help at this time.

8) **It’s only 9 months.** Pregnancy does not last forever. Morning sickness usually subsides somewhat after the first trimester. Bed rest only feels like forever! Pregnancy can be awful but it’s not permanent. With some combination of “good days”, recruited or paid help, and a relaxed standard of care, that nine months will be over before you know it.

**NEWBORNS**

Now, you have traded in constant barfing for being barfed on, bed rest for sleepless nights, and labor pains for teething pains. New motherhood is probably one of the most wonderful times of your life but also one of the most challenging times.

For your baby, this is the beginning of a lifetime of relationships with family – both people and animal family. Danielle Thomas, 8-month old daughter of Tonya Thomas, is already beginning to build her first hedgie friendships. Tonya describes the special bond that Danielle has developed with her hedgies: “Even though Danielle is only 8 months old, she loves to watch them play. They will come up to her and sniff her, and she will reach her hand out to them – Neither one scared of the other.”

Tonya also shares with us great advice on how to juggle the demands of new motherhood and hedgie motherhood. “For me, it’s all about a schedule. While Danielle is napping, the cages get cleaned, and the hedgies get fed. When Danielle goes to bed at night, the hedgies come out to play.

I have followed a similar routine, both when 5-year old Simon was small, and now with 6-month old Nigel in the house. I have a list of daily chores, prioritized, and when Nigel sleeps, I start working my way down the list. The list changes from day-to-day, and not everything on the list gets completed each day, but “hedgie care” is always at the top of the list. At the end of the day, the dishwasher may still be full, and the laundry not folded but the hedgies will be clean and fed. The key for me is to prioritize. It doesn’t really matter to me if the laundry isn’t folded. It’s more important to know my hedgies are happy!

A common tip for new mothers is to enlist the help of an older child in caring for a newborn. Five-year old Simon can get a diaper, put a blanket on the baby, entertain the baby with a toy, or hold a bottle. The same advice applies to pets. Simon also feeds the cat, dog, and hedgies every day. That’s three less chores for me!

**GROWING UP**

As our babies grow into toddlers and teenagers, we learn to juggle the demands of playgroups, T-ball, car pooling, homework, and a million other daily commitments. For those of us with hedgehogs, that list of...