



# SPIKY CRITTERS

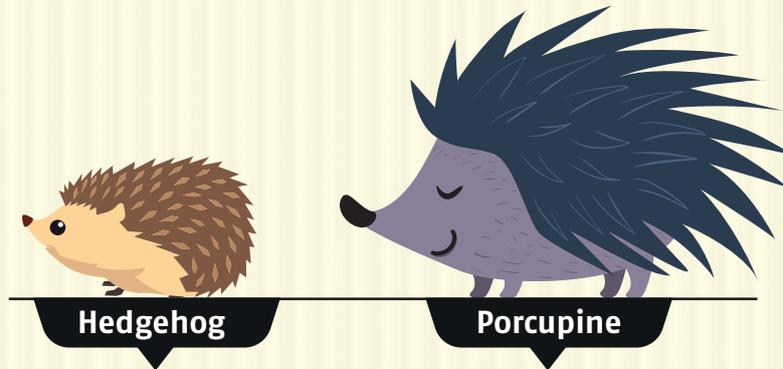



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Hedgehogs. You may think you know all about these spiky little creatures, but do you really know them?

The name 'hedgehog' was derived from the Middle English 'heyghoge'—from 'heyg' (hedge), as it is commonly found in hedgerows; and 'hoge' (hog), because of its pig-like snout. Hedgehogs are mainly nocturnal animals, coming out at night to search for food. These prickly creatures are not exclusively insectivores (insect-eaters), they are considered omnivorous as their diet consists of nearly anything they can find in their environment.

We commonly mistake porcupines for hedgehogs, and vice versa – so how do we tell them apart?



Hedgehog

Porcupine

**Distribution**

Africa, Europe, Asia

North and South America, Africa, Asia

**Average Length**

About 20 to 30 cm  
Sizes vary accordingly to species

About 63 to 91 cm  
Sizes vary according to species

**Defence**

Short quills

Long quills

**Number of Quills**

About 7,000 quills, averaging 2.5 cm in length

About 30,000 quills, averaging 5 cm in length

Both hedgehogs and porcupines defend themselves with the help of quills, which are sharp enough to ward off predators. However, the way they use these quills are vastly different. The quills of a porcupine are extremely sharp, and they can detach easily after being embedded into the victim's skin. Contrary to common belief, these quills are not venomous, but the wounds caused by them could get infected. However, this is unlikely, as the quills contain an antibiotic. When a porcupine is provoked, it arches its back, pulling the muscles that erect the quills. Once the quills are embedded, the porcupine expands, forcing the quills deeper—up to 3 cm—into the attacker's flesh. Porcupines do not shoot their quills at attackers. During threatening displays, they will flail their tails causing loose quills to dislodge and fly about, giving the impression they are thrown.



A hedgehog's quills are not as sharp compared to a porcupine's and cannot be easily detached from its body. When threatened, a hedgehog will roll up into a ball and make a puffing hiss to imitate a snake. Hedgehogs may look cute and cuddly, but if you're thinking of keeping one as a pet, squash those thoughts. According to NParks, hedgehogs are considered to be exotic animals that are illegal to be kept as pets. This is because such creatures are non-native to Singapore, and would affect our ecosystems and biodiversity if released in the wild.



### DID YOU KNOW?

In warfare, the 'hedgehog defence' is a military tactic for defending against a mobile armoured attack, or blitzkrieg. The defenders deploy in depth in heavily fortified positions suitable for an all-round defence.

## Activity:



## MAKE YOUR OWN FRUIT HEDGIE!

Try this activity at home! Remember to get an adult to help you so you don't hurt yourself.

What you need:

- Toothpick
- Knife
- Kiwi Fruit
- Blueberries
- Raisins

### STEPS

1



Cut a kiwi fruit in half as shown.

2



Bore 2 shallow holes on one end of the kiwi fruit. These holes are the 'eye sockets' of the hedgehog.

3



Take 2 blueberries and gently press them into the eye sockets.

4



Use a toothpick to pierce through a raisin and attach it near the base of the kiwi fruit half so it looks like this. The raisin represents the nose.

5



Prick the rind of the kiwi fruit with multiple toothpicks to form the quills of the hedgehog.

6



Your fruity hedgehog is now complete! Just like a real hedgehog, the predator can't get to its tasty insides from above since it is protected by its spikes. The only way to 'attack' it, would be to flip it over where it is unprotected.

