

# Ryston Rachel's Hedgehog Hotel

## Rescue , Rehabilitate & Release





## **Hedgehogs:**

**Written and presented  
by  
Jan Smith**

**There are 19 species in five genera of hedgehogs worldwide:**

**Erinaceus,  
Paraechinus,  
Mesechinus,  
Atelerix  
and  
Hemiechinus.**

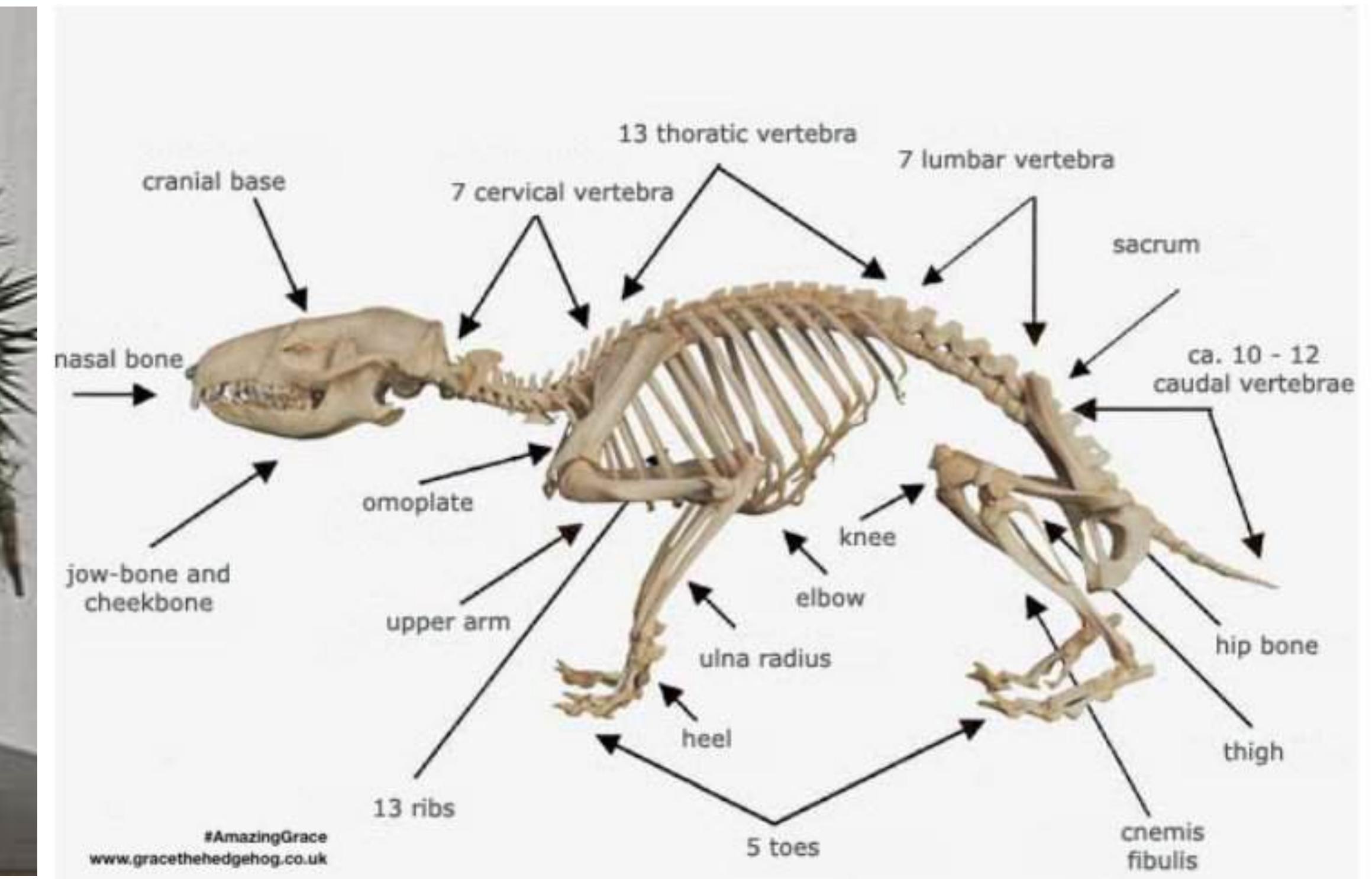
They live across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia



# *Erinaceus europaeus* - the British wild hedgehog



# Hog skeleton



#AmazingGrace  
www.gracethehedgehog.co.uk

“Hedgehogs in Britain have undergone a long historic decline, but differences between urban and rural populations are becoming increasingly apparent.

In urban areas, the picture is of a stable population that might be recovering, highlighting the importance of gardens and green spaces, and local action, in ensuring a future for hedgehogs.

In stark contrast, rural populations remain low and, in the last two decades, have continued to decline by between a third and three-quarters nationally. The largest declines are seen in the eastern half of England”.

**2011**

First State of Britain’s hedgehogs report - highlighted decline based on 10 years of surveys.

**2020**

Hedgehogs placed on **IUCN Red List as vulnerable to extinction** in the U.K.



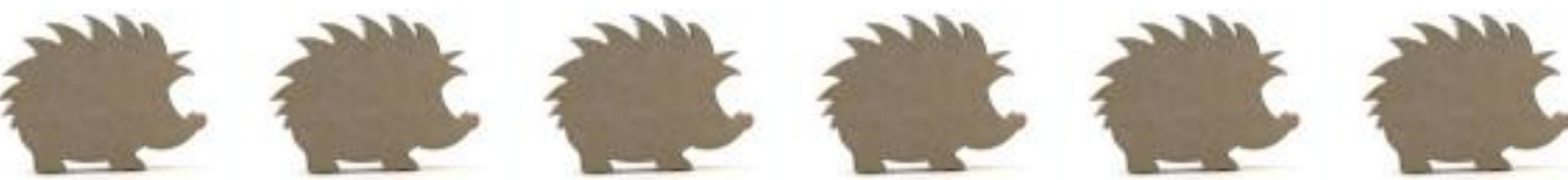
**Estimated number of UK hedgehogs**

**1950's - 30 million**

**1990's - 1.5 million**

**2020 - 879,000**

# Why?



## Environmental factors

Intensive agriculture

Soil quality

Loss of hedgerows

Herbicides

Loss of wide field margins

Pesticides

Mono-cultures

Loss of invertebrates

Loss of permanent pastures

Climate change

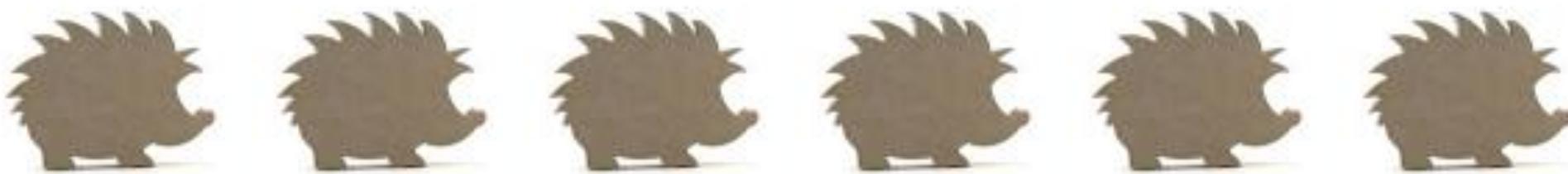
Fragmentation of habitat

Predation





# Why?



## Human factors

Manicured gardens

Enclosed gardens = fragmentation of habitat

Road casualties

Dogs

Netting

Ponds

Garden chemicals

Open drains

Bonfires

# LIVING IN THE WILD - basic needs



Ability to roam and find enough food each night

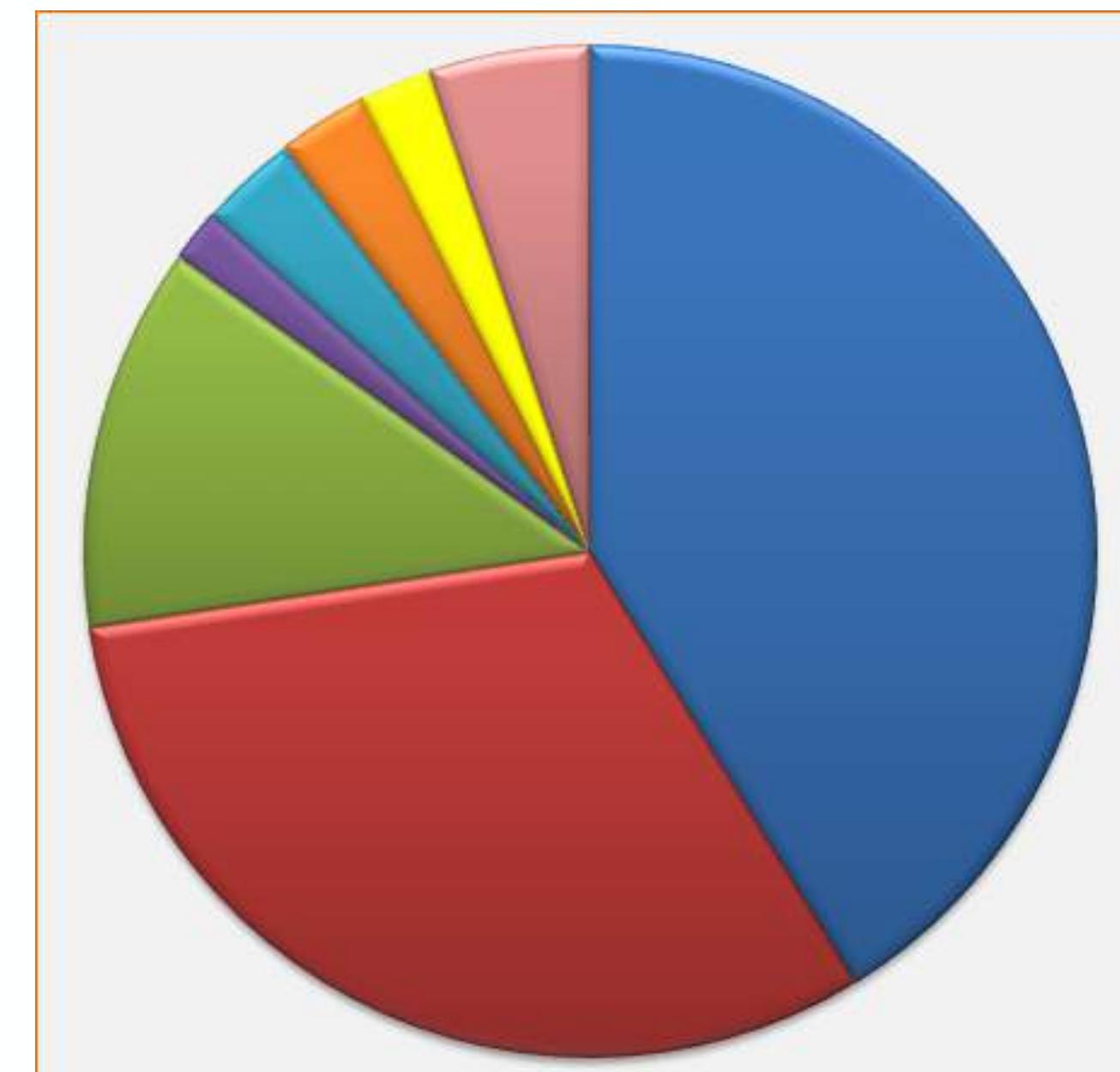
Access to water

Safe places to sleep

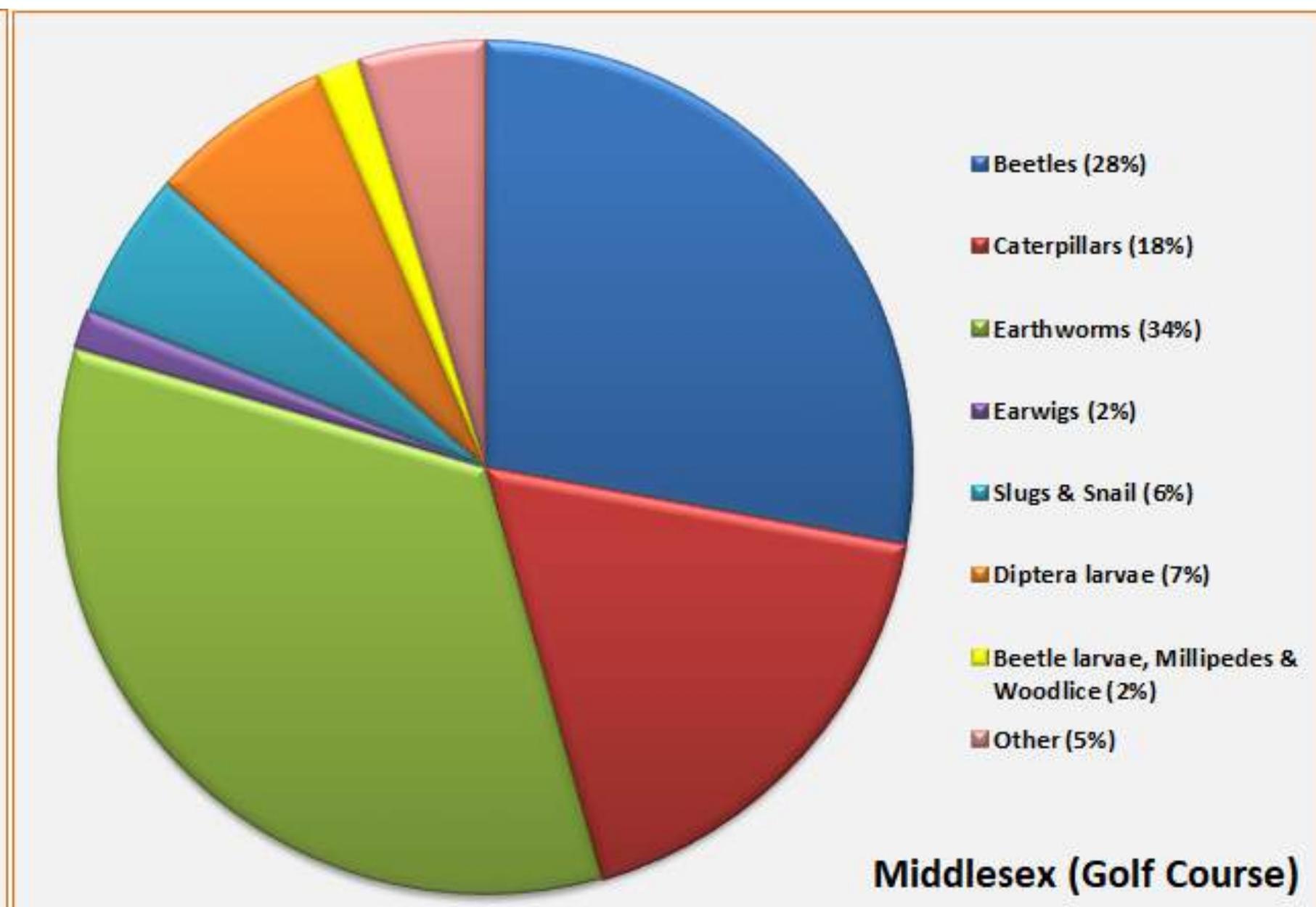
# DIET IN THE WILD

- Beetles and caterpillars are their preferred food.
- They are scavengers and will eat whatever they can find - needs must.
- They can travel over 2 km a night looking for food.

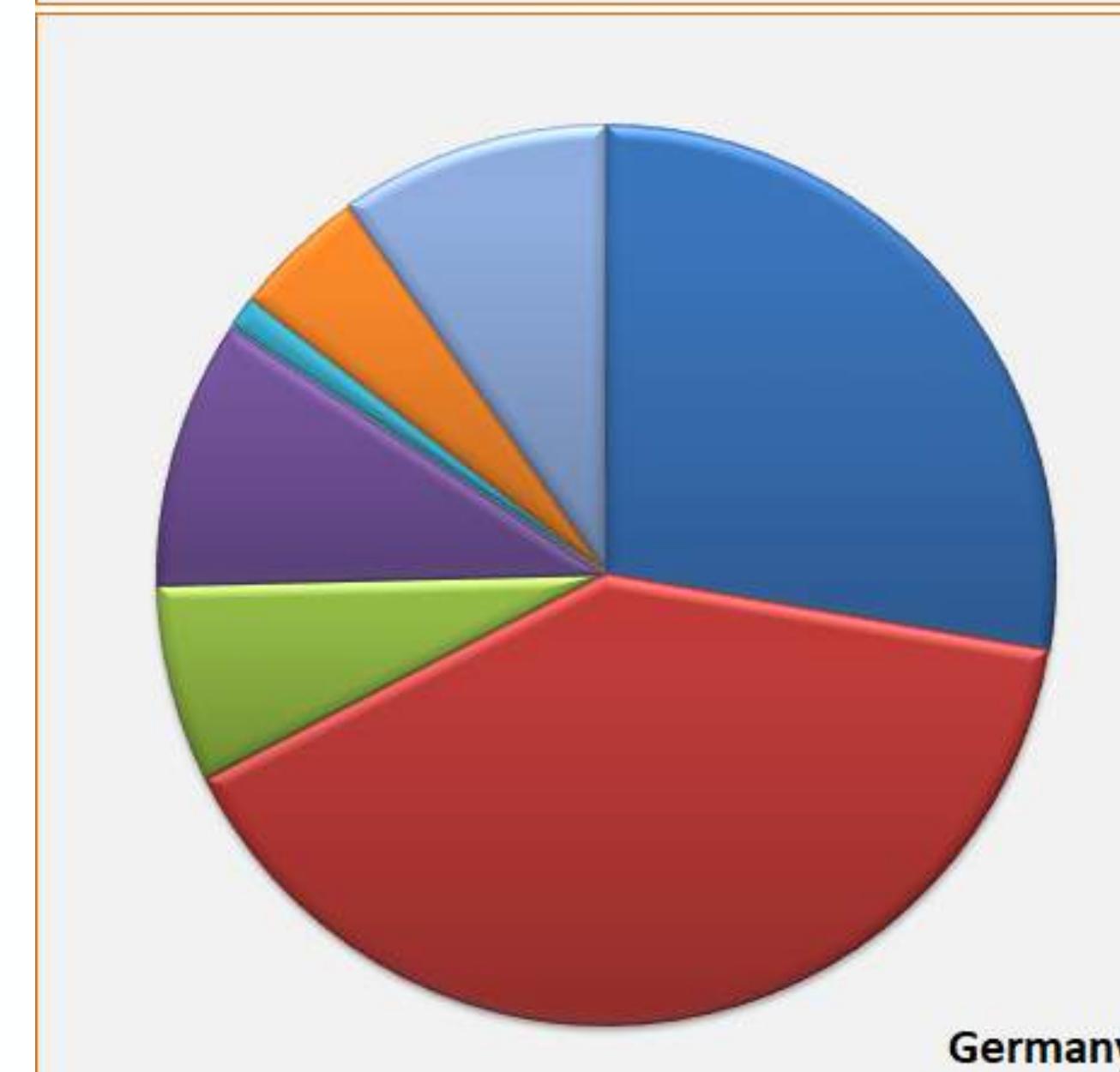




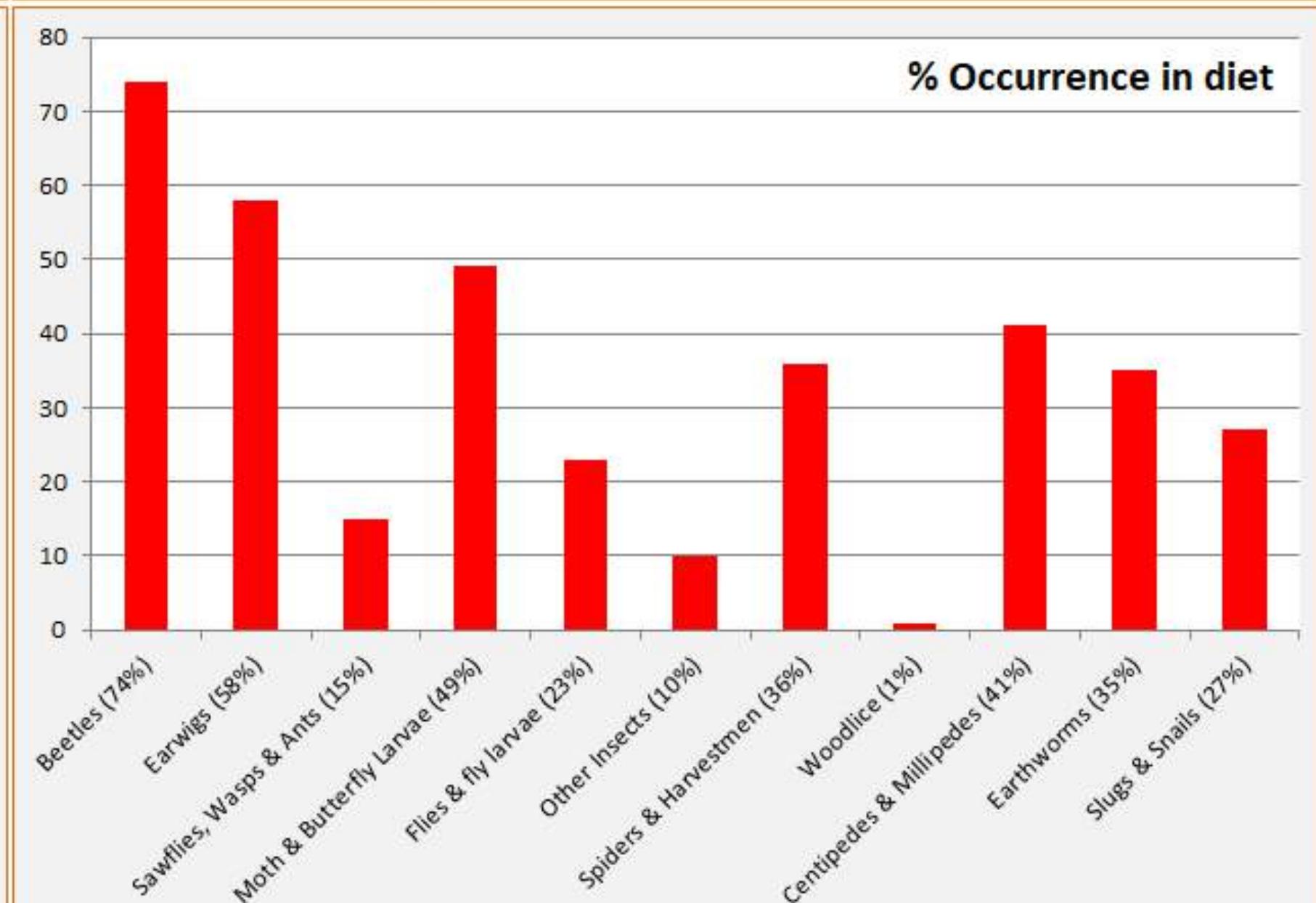
East Anglia (Rural)



Middlesex (Golf Course)



Germany (Rural & Suburban)



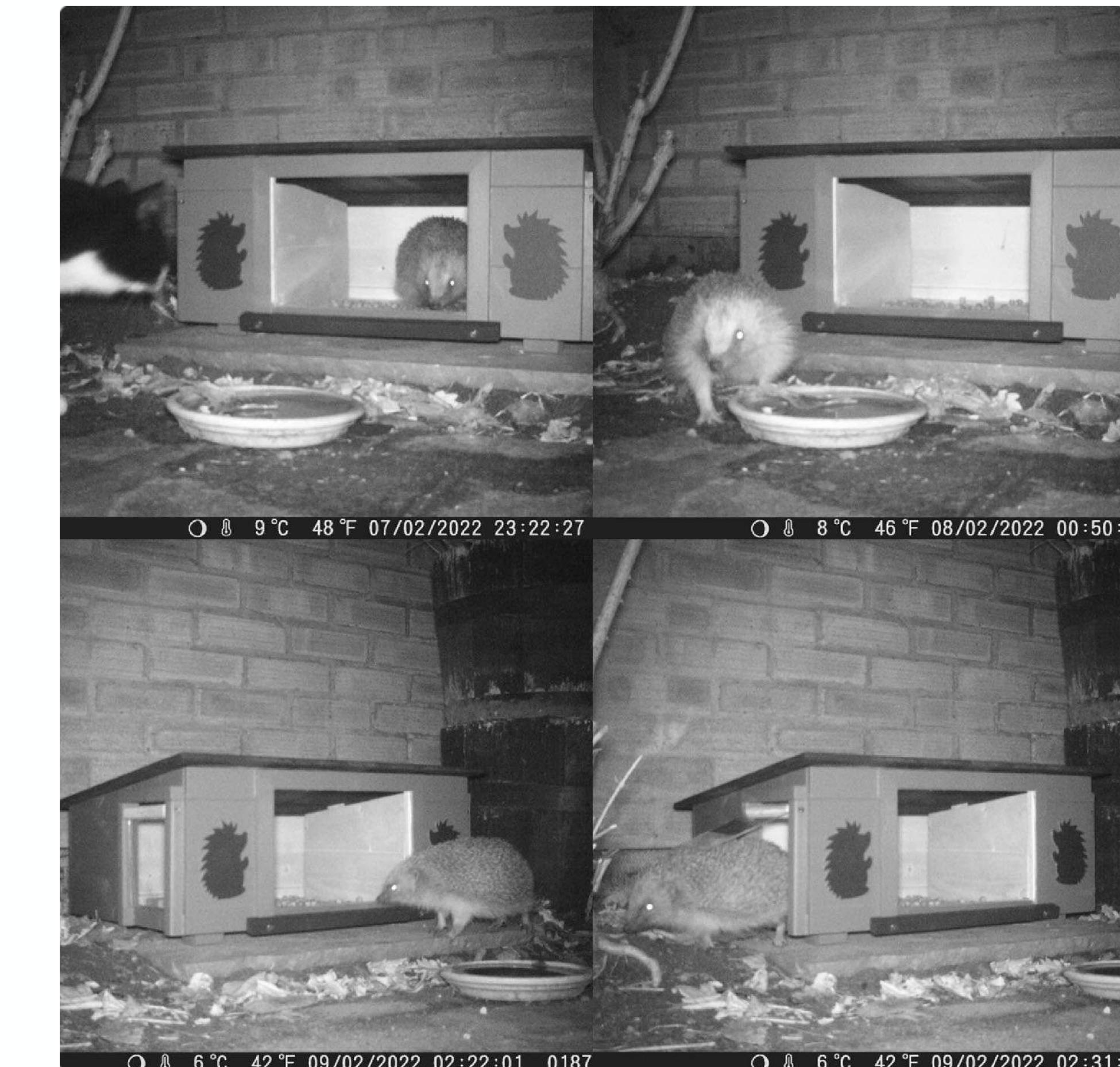
## How manicured gardens effect the food chain



# Hedgehog Highways



# Food and Water



# Pond Escape



# Offer Shelter



# Natural nests



# Hibernation

## What is it?

- Torpor - not sleep
- 3-4 hours to wake even from light hibernation
- 12 hours to wake fully

## Why hibernate?

- Shortage of food so they need to conserve physiological resources

## How? Complex!

- Heart rate reduces from >190 pm to 13 - 20 pm and reduces in strength
- Core skin temperature reduces from 35C to 7C -10C. Core temperature reduces slightly
- Respiration from 50 pm to every 1 or 2 breaths every few minutes with of apnoea <40 mins
- followed by tachypnoea

## When?

- Ambient temperature 5C or below
- Reduced availability of food
- Reduction in daylight hours

## Weight / body fat needed

- Ideally 600g or more (30% a mix of white and brown fat).

## Where?

- Hibernaculum - a dome of 30 - 60cm with walls 10cm thick
- Piles of leaves
- hedgerow
- partially buried in earth

## How long?

- October - April? Not any more.

## Is it continuous?

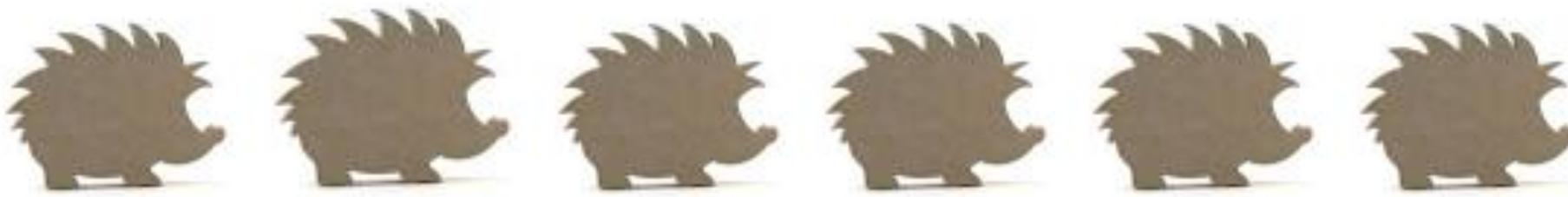
- intermittent
- rising temperatures
- weight loss
- moving nests
- disturbance

## Waking triggers

- temperatures
- hormones
- fat ratios

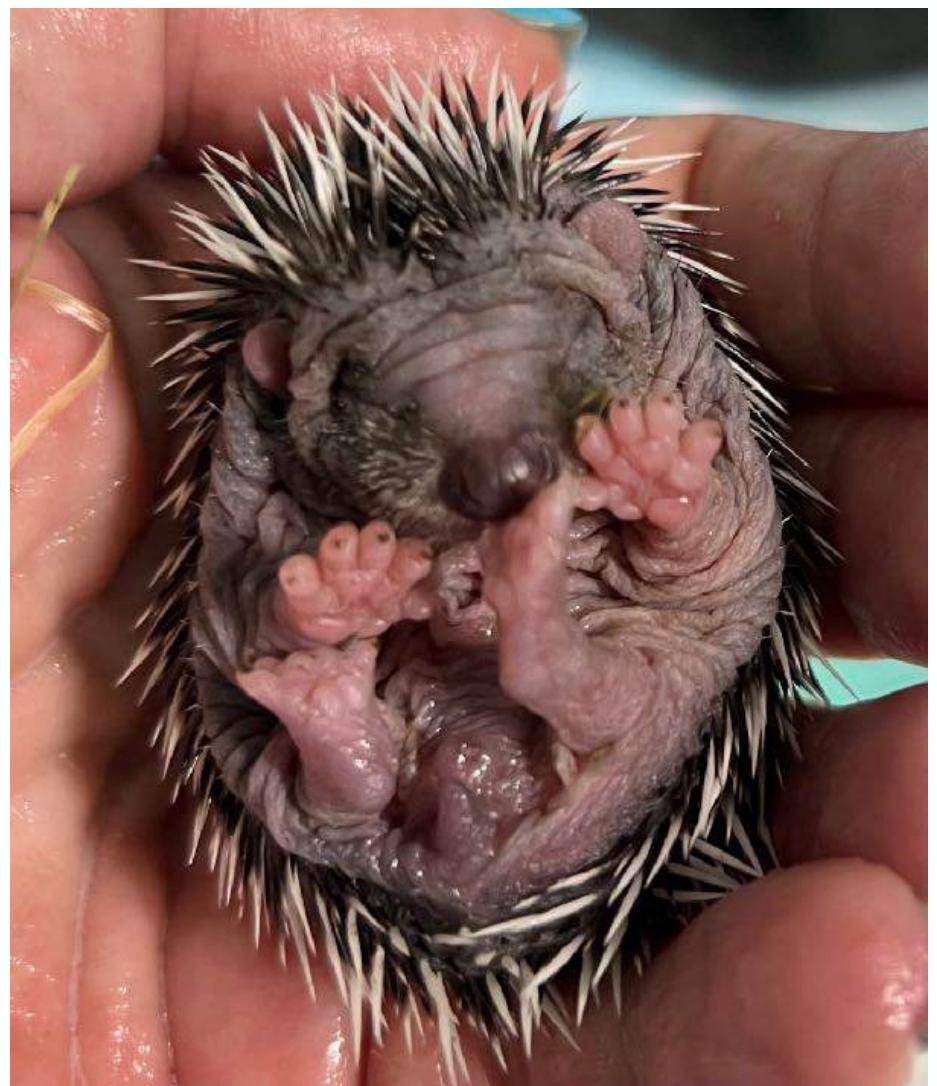


# Gestation and Development



Pregnancy is around 30 - 40 days

Mum will often be seen out and about in the day searching for nest materials and food - she will be moving with purpose and this is the only exception to the **out in the day is not ok** mantra.



Litters sizes are usually between 5-7 with only 2 -3 surviving to the weaning stage.

The hoglets stay with their mum for around 8 weeks.

If a nest is disturbed early on the mum will sadly eat her young.

Females can have two litters a year.

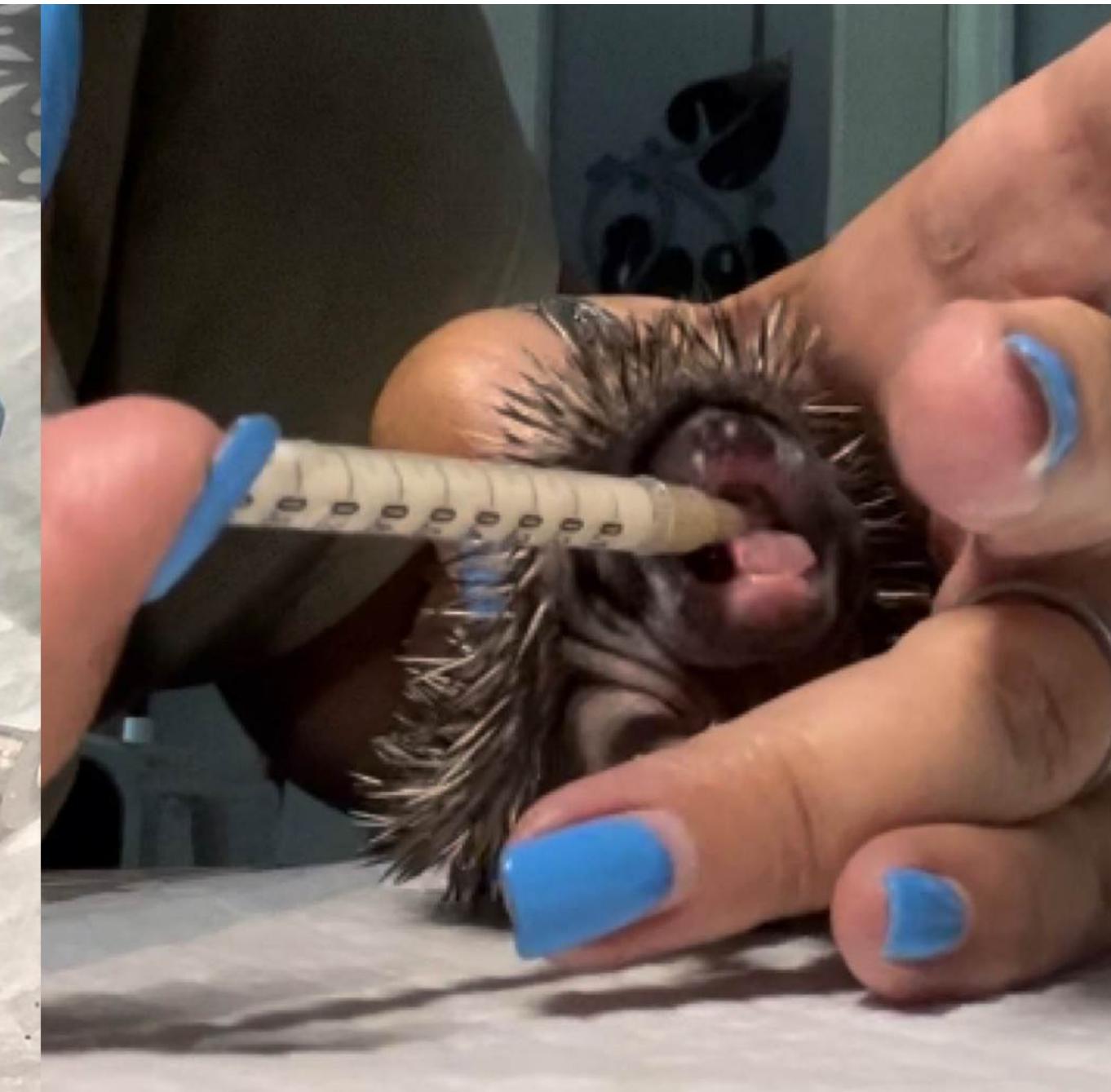
The males play no part in the parenting.

# NEWBORN



# ONE DAY OLD







# ONE WEEK OLD



**TWO  
WEEKS  
OLD -  
eyes  
open**



# THREE WEEKS OLD - teeth starting to appear



# FOUR WEEKS OLD



# **SIX WEEKS OLD - eating for themselves**



# EIGHT WEEKS OLD - independent



# A quick guide : Hedgehog in need of help?



## 1) Adult moving with purpose in summer months – Leave Alone

Though hedgehogs are nocturnal there are times when they can come out during daylight hours. Pregnant or nursing mothers be out during the day, they will be moving with purpose gathering bedding or seeking food/water.

## 2) 'Sunbathing' on the Lawn – to a Rescue

Seeing a hedgehog apparently “sunbathing” out in the open on your lawn means the hog is in serious trouble. Hedgehogs lying out like this are very ill and speedy intervention is vital.

## 3) Staggering Around / Wobbling – to a Rescue

Hogs looking drunk probably have life threatening hypothermia /dehydration and need to be gently warmed up as soon as possible.

Pop it in a box with a wrapped hot water bottle and call for help **urgently**. Don’t offer food or water.

#### **4) Dragging one or both legs – ideally straight to a Vet**

This hog also needs rescuing but it's one for the vet.

Many vets have relationships with local rescues so will be able to help.

As well as placing the hog carefully in a warm box you could also try offering a little food & water in this case.



#### **5) Coughing – to a Rescue**

This could well be a bad case of lungworm which sounds nasty but is easily curable by your local rescue centre. So make contact with them and get the hog to them as soon as possible.

#### **6) Caught in Netting – to a Rescue**

Hedgehogs are inquisitive. They will stick their noses into all sorts of things. And if you're covered in long spines, once you've stuck your nose into something it can be tricky to get back out again.

Take the hog and the netting to the rescue . If you have to cut the netting to get the hog free cut as far away from the hog as possible and try to avoid pulling.

Do not release this hog as damage caused by constriction can take hours / days to develop.

## **7) Hedgehog With Cuts and Missing Spines – to a Rescue**

Cuts, flesh wounds and patches of missing spines is likely to have been hit by a car /cut by a strimmer, or attacked by a dog.

Needs taking to a rescue or a vet **urgently**.



## **8) Hoglets Out in the Daytime – immediately contact local rescue for advice**

If you see hoglets out in the day without their mother scoop them up immediately and get them indoors away from flies .

If you have disturbed a nest and the mother has run off cover the hoglets up completely and the mother doesn't come back within an hour or the hoglets start 'squeaking' they will need to be rescued.

**Don't be tempted** to try to raise baby hedgehogs yourself .

Hoglets are delicate creatures with complicated needs. Their best chance of survival is with the mother. But failing this they will need trained, specialist helpers to survive.



## **9) Skinny Hog Out in Autumn – contact local rescue for advice**

Autumn juvenile hogs, or hogs born later in the summer, may struggle to get to the weight they need to safely hibernate.

A hedgehog needs to be 600 grams to successfully hibernate.  
Contact your local rescue centre and seek their advice.

## **10) Dead Hedgehog? – contact local rescue for advice**

If you think you have found a dead hedgehog check very carefully.

Sick or injured hedgehogs can be very cold and still. They may look and feel dead when they are actually still alive with a chance of survival.

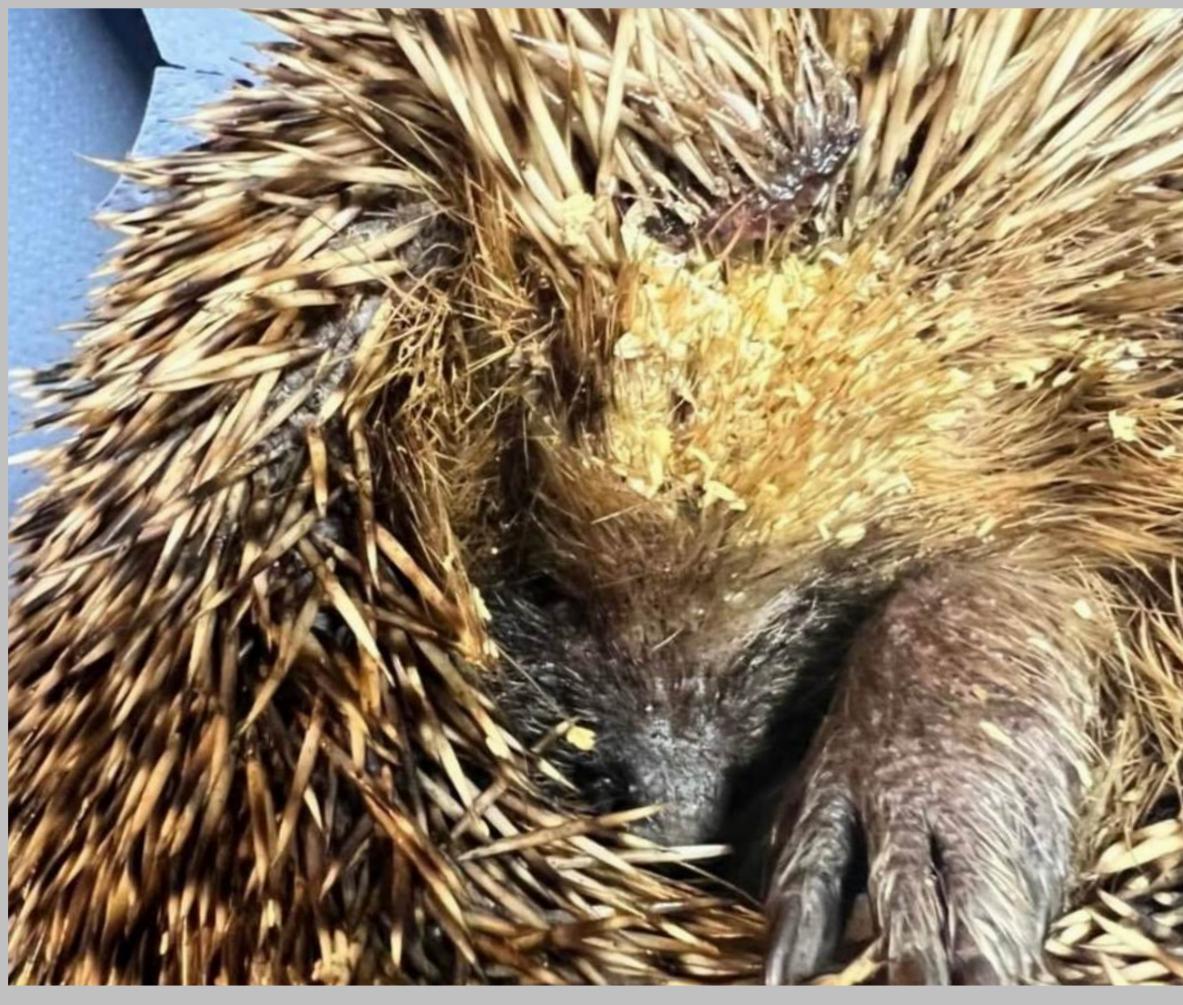
Have you disturbed its nest ? Could it be hibernating ?

Put the hedgehog into a box indoors and contact your local rescue.

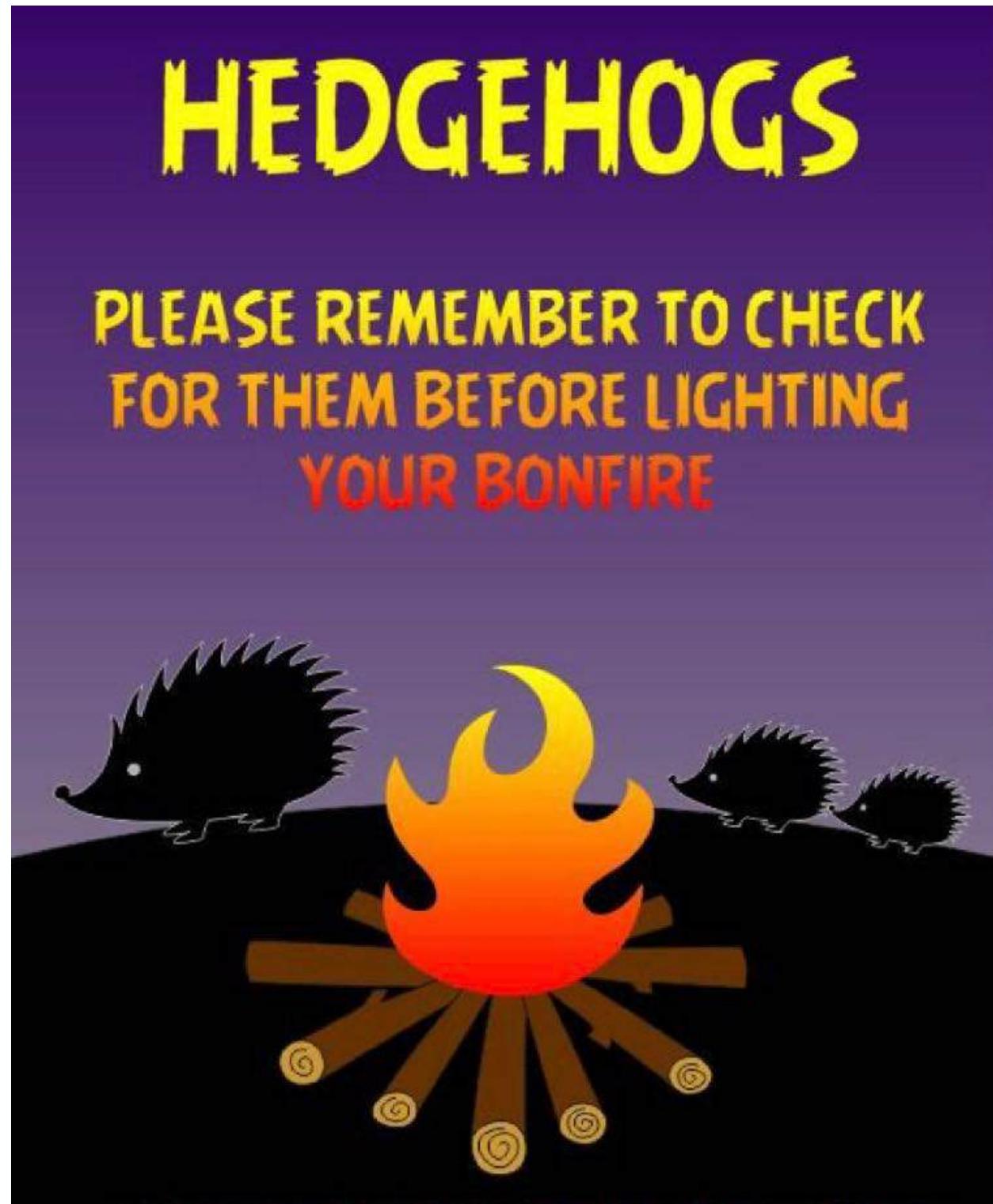
# Dehydration & Malnutrition



# Flystrike, Ticks & Fleas



# Netting, Bonfires and Strimmers

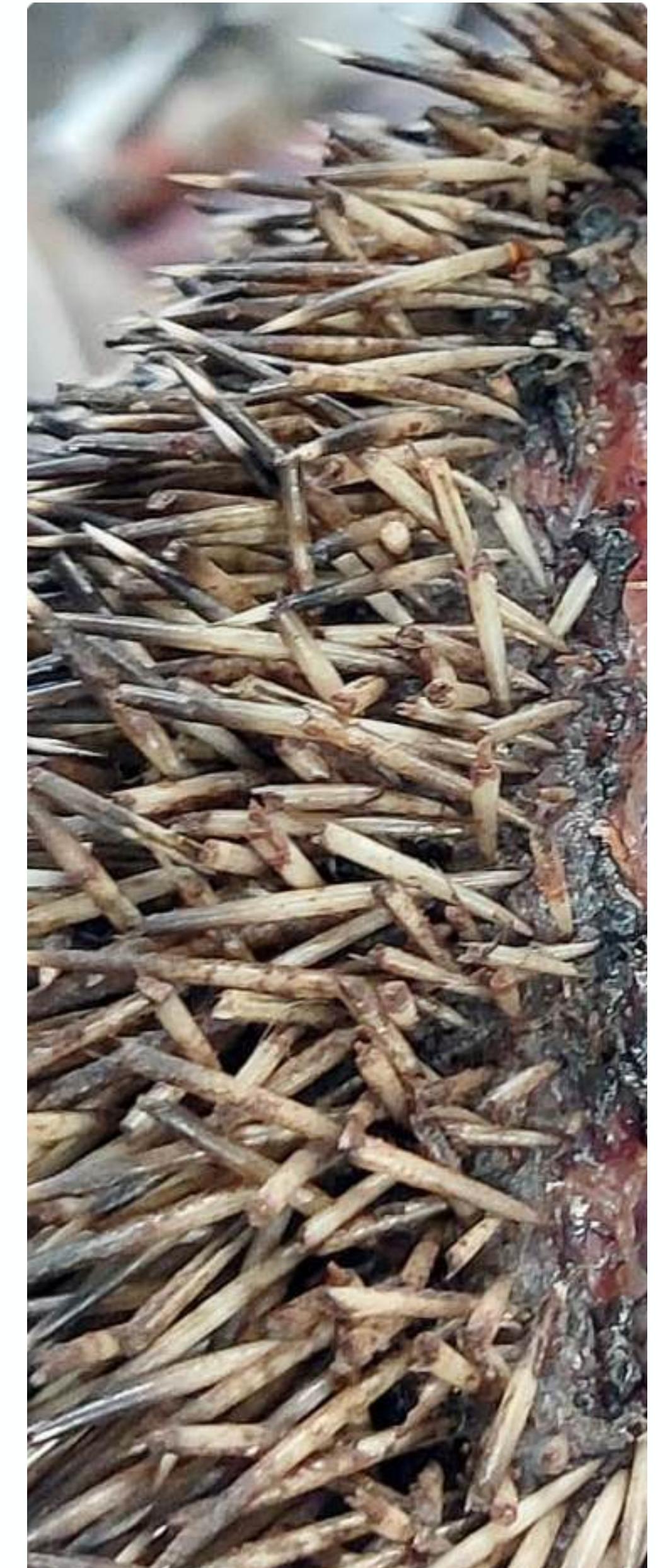


**Remember:**  
Lift it & re-site it  
**before** you light it

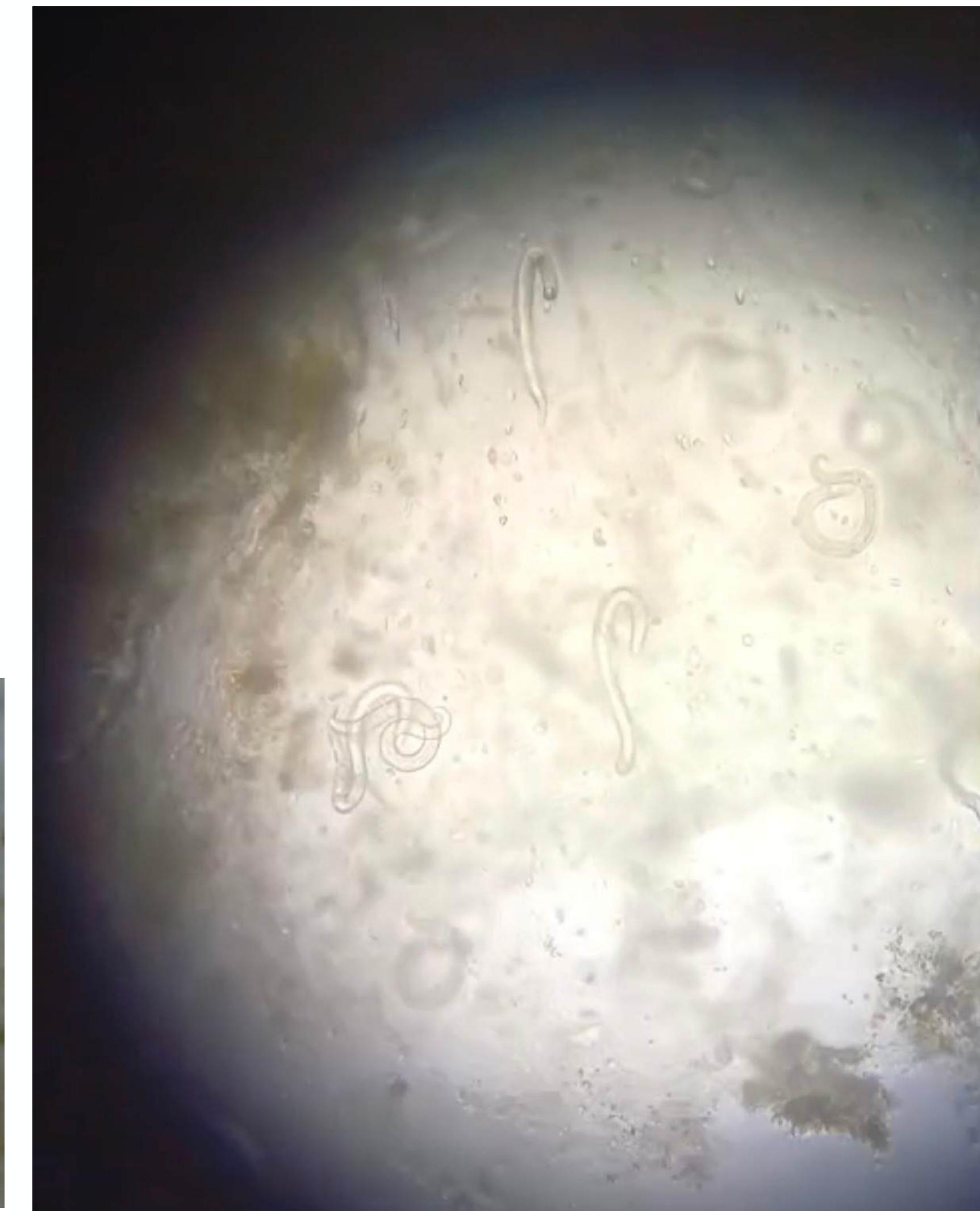
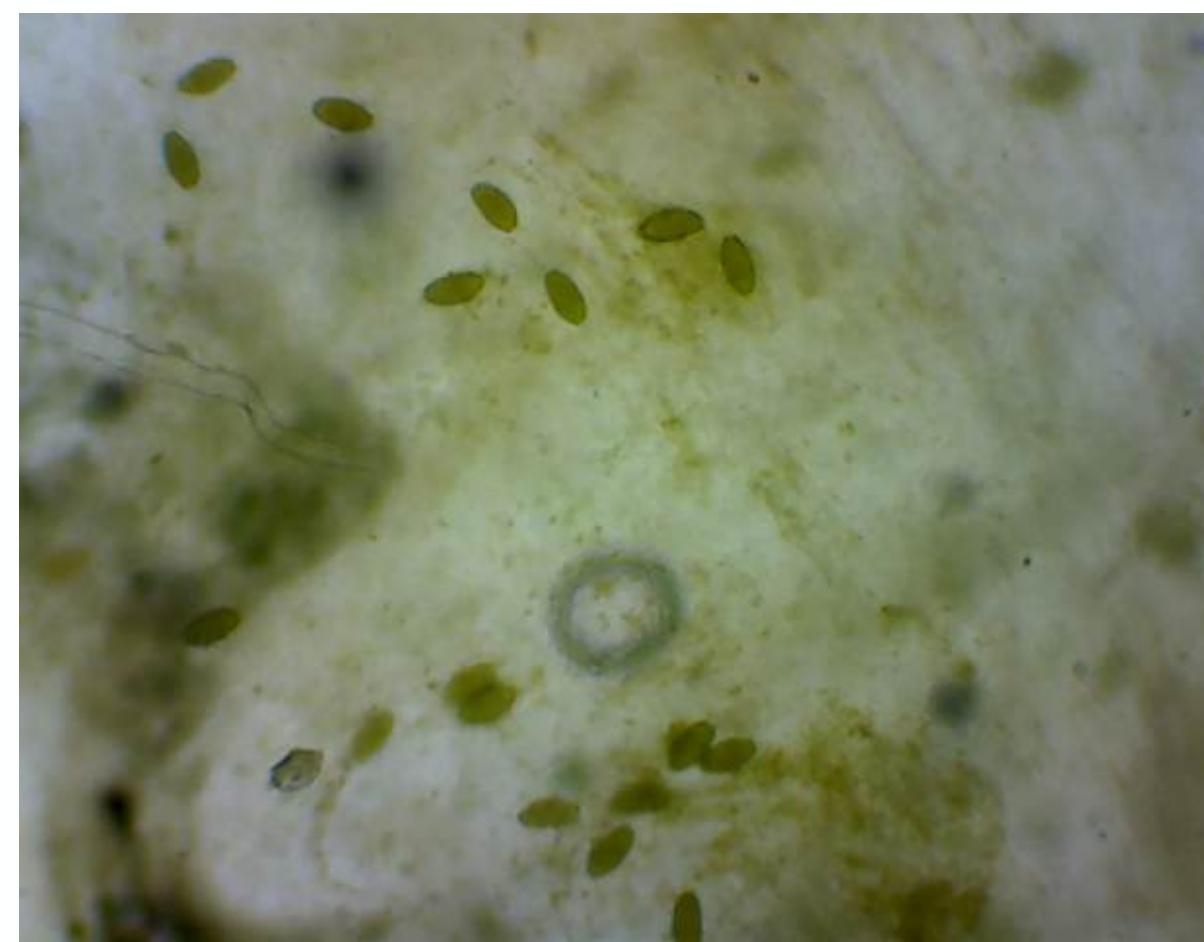


Please lift all netting at  
least 6 inches / 15 cm  
off the ground

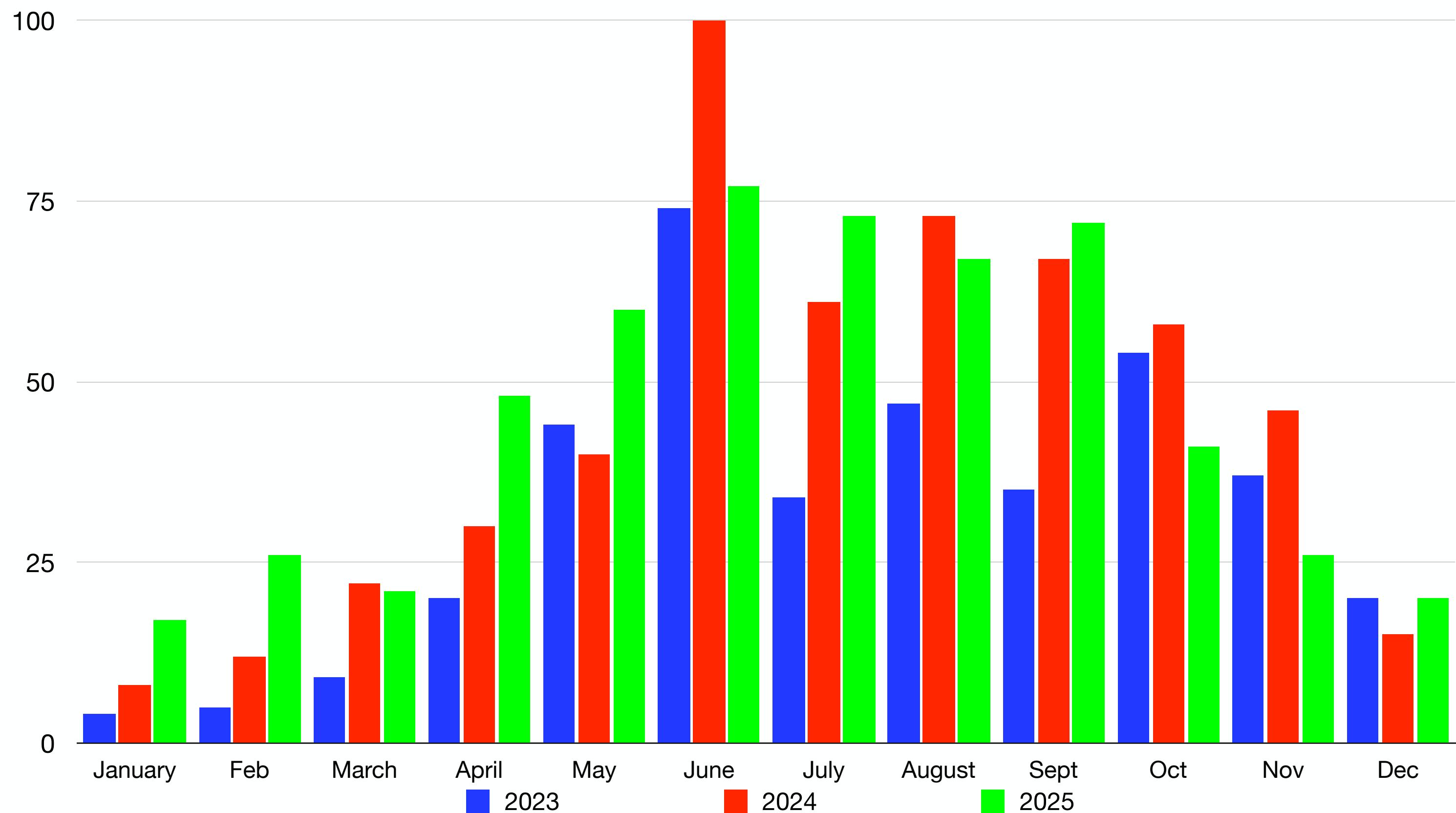
**99%** of strimmer injuries  
result in having the  
hedgehog put to sleep.



# Microscopic sample checks



## Admissions 2023 / 2024/ 2025



	Admissions		
	2023	2024	2025
January	4	8	17
Feb	5	12	26
March	9	22	21
April	20	30	48
May	44	40	60
June	74	100	77
July	34	61	73
August	47	73	67
Sept	35	67	72
Oct	54	58	41
Nov	37	46	26
Dec	20	15	20

LAST 8 DAYS OF REPORTED WEIGHTS, DAILY OR WEEKLY CHANGES IN THESE, AND WET OR DRY FOOD GIVEN EACH DAY																											35																																																							
10	11-Jan			Change	12-Jan			Change	13-Jan			Change	14-Jan			Change	15-Jan			Change	16-Jan			Change	17-Jan			Change	18-Jan			35																																																		
Current Fosterer	Wet Food	Weight	Dry Food	Hedgehog																																																																														
Amy	711	15	726	4	730	32	762	2	764	18	782	7	789	15	800	10	808	12	820	11	832	14	840	13	852	16	864	17	876	19	COCOPOP																																																			
Amy	456	3	459	9	468	24	492	17	509	7	516	16	532	13	544	10	556	15	568	14	580	12	592	17	604	16	616	15	628	14	DINAH																																																			
Claire																														ELFIE																																																				
Claire	1050	-5	1045	37	1082	16	1098	6	1104	10	1116	1	1128	10	1140	11	1152	12	1164	13	1176	14	1188	15	1200	16	1212	17	1224	18	OAKLEY																																																			
Claire	805	0	805	29	834	24	858	0	858	10	868	1	869	9	878	11	888	12	896	13	904	14	912	15	920	16	928	17	936	18	PEBBLES																																																			
Dave & Jo	464	0	464	33	497	-28	469	17	486	34	520	11	531	-5	546	12	561	13	576	14	591	15	606	16	621	17	636	18	651	19	BUBO																																																			
Jacky																														JELLYSTONE																																																				
Jane																														CASEY																																																				
Jane	625	-23	602	38	640	14	654	-12	642	0	642	-7	635	14	649	15	656	16	663	17	670	18	677	19	684	20	691	21	ECHO																																																					
Jane	39	752	-10	742	8	750	-7	743	1	744	15	759	0	759	16	769	17	775	18	783	19	791	20	800	21	809	22	818	23	MCQUEEN																																																				
Jess	540	11	551	24	575	11	586		586		596		606		616		626		636		646		656		666		676		686		JAKE																																																			
Jess	777	16	793	-18	775	26	801		801		811		821		831		841		851		861		871		881		891		901		MARY																																																			
Jess	450	-5	445	23	468	-3	465	14	479	21	485	16	496	-31	506	17	516	18	526	19	536	20	546	21	556	22	566	23	TIMOTHY																																																					
Rachael	647	0	647	11	658	0	658	13	671	23	694	11	705	5	710	12	721	13	731	14	741	15	751	16	761	17	771	18	ADZUKI																																																					
Rachael																														LITTLE MO																																																				
Rachael	490	40	530	32	562	-25	537	-7	530	70	600	13	613	15	628	16	643	17	658	18	673	19	688	20	703	21	718	22	MAVERICK																																																					
Rachael	1115	-61	1054	40	1094	6	1100	13	1113		1120	-17	1136	-6	1090	15	1105	16	1120	17	1135	18	1150	19	1165	20	1180	21	MISTA																																																					
Rachael	648	14	662	20	682	-3	679	29	708	12	720	-38	682	-61	621	17	642	18	662	19	682	20	702	21	722	22	742	23	MR ELF																																																					
Rachael	445	-6	439	6	445	11	456	-5	451	14	465	-14	451	18	469	19	483	20	493	21	503	22	513	23	523	24	533	25	PRETZEL																																																					
Rachel	59	1277	23	1300	-35	1265	50	1315	35	1350	-39	1311		1311		1311		1311		1311		1311		1311		1311		1311		BIG AL																																																				
Rachel	648	-1	647	17	664	-6	658	9	667	19	686	13	699	14	713	15	723	16	733	17	743	18	753	19	763	20	773	21	GAYNOR																																																					
Rachel	691	4	695	5	700	8	708		708	44	752		752		752		752		752		752		752		752		752		752		KARI																																																			
Rachel	616	-2	614	-8	606	25	631	5	636	32	668		668		668		668		668		668		668		668		668		668		MABEL																																																			
Rachel	549	15	564	13	577	16	593	12	605	12	617	5	622	18	640	19	657	20	674	21	691	22	708	23	725	24	742	25	MOTTEUX																																																					
Rachel	264	12	276	12	288	-1	287	13	300	0	300	18	318	9	327	10	344	11	361	12	378	13	395	14	412	15	429	16	NEVE																																																					
Rachel																														YOGI																																																				
Sarah																														PINTO																																																				
Vanda & Colin																														BOU																																																				
Vanda & Colin	500	8	508	23	531	-1	530	12	542	15	557	24	581	9	590	10	590	11	590	12	590	13	590	14	590	15	590	16	590	17	590	18	590	19	590	20	590	21	590	22	590	23	590	24	590	25	590	26	590	27	590	28	590	29	590	30	590	31	590	32	590	33	590	34	590	35	590	36	590	37	590	38	590	39	590	40	590	41	590	42	590	43</



## 2025 stats

In total as a team we admitted **548** hedgehogs.

We have successfully fixed up and released **338**

We have **30** still in our care.

Stats wise here come the figures: Male **255** Female **293**

Died - **133** (**60** of which died within 24 hours)

Euthanasia at vets - **38**

Dead on arrival at hotel - **9**

Assuming the 30 still in care are all successfully released once the weather allows (as they are expected to) this would mean a success rate of 67% up from 60% last year.

Average time in our care 42.4 days down from 51.9 in 2024

Average spend per patient: £51

## How you can help hedgehogs:

- Make a hole : Hedgehogs roam up to 2 miles a night therefore it is so important to give hedgehogs the space they need by making sure we put a 13 x 13cm hole in fences and walls.
- Make ponds and drains safe. Hedgehogs are great swimmers and climbers, but they cannot climb out of steep-sided ponds, pools or deep holes. Cover up drains and holes.
- Create a wild corner. Let wild plants grow in a corner of your garden. Hedgehogs may build a nest there, plus it would make a great food source.
- Put out food and water. Hedgehogs really appreciate us supplementing their natural diets! Meaty cat or dog wet food or cat biscuits are ideal. **Avoid mealworms, peanuts, suet and milk.** Always make fresh water available in shallow dishes.
- Always check before strimming.
- Always check bonfires before lighting.
- Hedgehogs are nocturnal so remember :



**OUT IN THE DAY MEANS NOT OK**

