

## Hedgehogs on Golf Courses

About 600 years ago agricultural practises increased and lots of woodland was felled. Hedgerows increased around the new farmland and this provided a new habitat for hedgehogs – originally a woodland animal. In Victorian times the hedgehog was also known as the ‘Cellarhog’ as they were kept under the stairs in large houses specifically to eat the cockroaches.



In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the mechanisation of farming increased so the number of hedgerows decreased as did hedgerows to allow for greater field size. The use of pesticides also increased, leading to the death of much of the hedgehogs food supply. They are omnivorous, feeding on a wide range of invertebrates, but preferring slugs, snails, worms, millipedes, beetles, frogs and even forest fruits and dead carcasses. They are nocturnal and hunt by smell as they have fairly poor eyesight. In winter when food is scarce they hibernate. Just in case any hungry predator might think the sleeping fattened hedgehog would make a tasty treat they have 5-7,000 spines to act as a defence mechanism.

Although originally a woodland animal the best place for the modern British hedgehog is a golf course. The closely cropped greens and tees are easy to find worms in and the rough is ideal for nesting.

By placing piles of dead leaves in woodland areas or out-of-play areas on the course you can also encourage hedgehogs to hibernate over winter on the course. Although, care must be taken that these leaves are not removed or burnt during hibernation.



Hedgehogs are often found in gardens too. It is estimated that one hedgehog requires at least 12 average sized gardens to sustain enough food. Therefore, it is important they are free to move from garden to garden – they are relatively good climbers but require small gaps under fences to be able to move from garden to garden.

If you are unfortunate enough to find a hedgehog that is unwell then please refer to the website below or contact Tiggy Winkles Hedgehog Rescue Centre 01844 292292

<http://www.sttiggywinkles.org.uk> or alternatively <http://britishwildlifehelpline.com>

If you have seen a hedgehog in the **Lothians and Borders** on your golf course please go to [www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/hedgehogs.php](http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/hedgehogs.php) to report it.