

# As winter warms up spare a thought for a prickly predicament

by Betty Anderson

HAVE a heart this winter and look out for confused hedgehogs whose body clocks are on the blink because of the warm start to the winter.

Wilmslow wildlife expert Martin Turner put out a plea for the prickly creatures saying their plight was grave.

"They are coming out of hibernation looking for food and many just will not survive because there is nothing out there for them," he said.

## Weak

Martin of Lacey Green who runs a wildlife sanctuary at Nether Alderley expects many weak and dazed hedgehogs to be handed in.

He said many were born late in the year because of the warm autumn leaving them underweight for their big sleep.

"They need to be at least 600 grams to hibernate successfully and many are half that weight and do not have the fat reserves to last the winter.

"They are waking up looking for food at night but there is no food for them," he said.

"And they will be unable to survive winter when the colder weather



**PRICKLY plight:** Martin with one of the hedgehogs.

does come."

Concerned animal lovers can leave cat food out on a saucer at night but there is no certainty that hedgehogs will benefit as foxes and cats are just as likely to snap up the unexpected feast.

## Death

The warm weather, almost certainly due to global warming, could be

a death sentence for small mammals like hedgehogs and many other wildlife species, he added

Over the past year the number of hedgehogs which survived hibernation fell sharply and with the Met Office predicting 2007 will be England's hottest since records began the plight of the hedgehog will become even more acute in future.