

A Very Sticky Situation

Porcupines are lumbering, rotund rodents with needle-like spikes, called quills, covering their back, sides, and tail. A single porcupine can have more than 30,000 quills, which are actually sharp bristles of fused hair. When another animal attacks the porcupine, its quills detach, burrowing into the adversary's flesh and inflicting painful, potentially deadly wounds.

It's easy to tell when porcupines are mad: They stomp their feet, hiss, and shake their quills, which normally lie flat against the porcupine's body. While porcupines are rarely aggressive, they'll defend themselves by charging or swatting their spiked tail at opponents.

Porcupines are herbivores, eating leaves, plants, fruit, and the tender layer of tissue beneath the bark of trees. A porcupine can fell a whole tree if it removes too much bark. The head and body of a porcupine is between 25 to 36 inches. And the tail can add another 8 to 10 inches to the entire length.

Porcupine Facts:

>Porcupines are the third largest rodents in the world, and the second largest in North America.

>Porcupines *cannot* throw their quills, as was previously thought. When a porcupine feels threatened, it tenses up and attacks predators with the swat of its tail, embedding quills into their skin. Only on occasion will loose quills fall out before it strikes, creating the illusion that they're being shot out.

>There are two different types of porcupines. Old World porcupines live in Southern Europe, Asia, and Africa. New World porcupines are indigenous to North America and Northern South America.

>Old World porcupines may not be good climbers, but they are excellent swimmers.

[<http://mentalfloss.com/article/64834/11-prickly-facts-about-porcupines>]

