

Caring for your

Chinchilla



life span 12-15 years

diet The natural diet of the chinchilla consists of grasses, cactus fruit, leaves, and the bark of small shrubs and bushes. The captive diet consists of 1-2 tbsp of high quality chinchilla or rabbit pellets, free-choice high quality grass hay, and small amounts of fresh vegetables.

housing

- Caging: Chinchillas require lots of space with multiple levels for jumping and climbing.
- Use small gauge wire (15 mm x 15 mm) to prevent limb injury.
- Cage furniture: Provide visual security (i.e. PVC piping)
- Numbers: Chinchillas are social animals that may be housed in pairs or colonies.
- Temperature: Chinchillas easily succumb to heat stress at temperatures exceeding 80°F.
- “Neighbors”: Chinchillas should not be housed near rabbits. Even healthy rabbits can harbor a variety of bacteria that can cause morbidity or mortality.

treats & toys

- Feed no more than 1 tsp per day of treats (apples, grains, raisins, sunflower seeds).
- Enrichment: Chinchillas require at least 30 minutes of **supervised** exercise or play outside of their cage daily.
- Provide access to dust baths daily or at least several times weekly.
 - Remove dust after each use.
- “Flying saucer” exercise wheels are preferable over “regular” exercise wheels to minimize the risk of back and limb problems.
- Chinchillas love to chew; avoid wooden cages and provide toys for them to chew on. This will help keep their teeth, which are continually growing, in good condition

restraint

Chinchillas are relatively easy to restrain. Gently hold around the chest and grasp the tail base. When frightened or held overzealously, 'chins' can shed patches of fur ("fur slip").

Never scruff a chinchilla!

If handling on a table, place one hand in front of the shoulders and one on the tail to prevent them from jumping.

healthcare

If your chinchilla is exhibiting any of these signs, it's important to get it to a veterinarian right away:

- Watery eyes
- Nasal discharge or wheezing
- Pawing at mouth
- Constantly attending a particular body area
- Agitated behavior or complete disinterest
- Red and warm ears
- Drooling or wet chin/chest area
- Less/more food or water consumption

It is important to keep a good relationship with your veterinarian to ensure the health of your chinchilla. Annual wellness visits are recommended.

behavior

In general, chinchillas are relatively calm, quiet, and can be shy. Chinchillas rarely bite, but they may urinate or release their scent glands if they do not want to be handled. Chinchillas are typically active at dusk and at night, but may adapt and become more active during the day. They are very agile and love to jump and climb. Female chinchillas may be aggressive towards males. It is best to keep them separate to avoid any unwanted breeding.

