



Owning and Caring For Chinchillas

These little balls of energy are highly social creatures who love to run, jump, and play throughout the evening hours. They have delicate bone structure and are prone to chewing on things they shouldn't, therefore, may not be the right choice for a small child. Chinchillas are very clean animals, have almost no body odor, and make excellent fluffy companions!

Facts:

- Lifespan 10-15 years
- Herbivore
- Adult weight 14-28oz
- Grow up to 12 inches
- Gestation (pregnancy) about 105-115 days
- Sexual maturity 7-10mo
- Most active at dusk, night, and dawn
- Require dust baths

Preventative Care:

- Complete physical exam every 6-12 months
- Yearly fecal exam to check for parasites
- Monthly exam of males for penile hair rings
- Annual blood work to monitor organ function

Common Problems:

- Dental disease
- Skin infections
- Gastrointestinal disorder
- Penile hair ring (males)
- Heat stress
- Respiratory infections
- Trauma

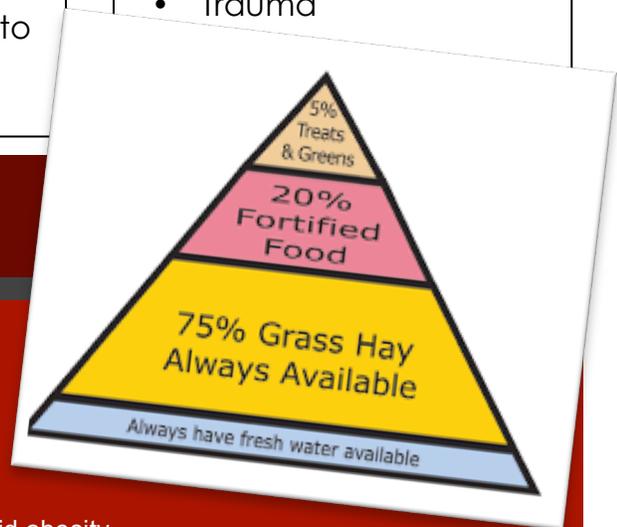
DIET ESSENTIALS

Hay: Overall, your chinchilla's diet should be high in fiber, low in carbohydrates, and low in sugars to prevent dental and gastrointestinal problems. Fresh hay should be available 24 hours a day. Hay is essential to a chinchilla's good health, providing the roughage that helps to keep their teeth from becoming overgrown. Popular choices include Timothy, Brome, and Bermuda grass hays.

Pellets: Every chinchilla should have high quality chinchilla pellets as a part of their diet. You should limit your chinchilla to 1-2 Tbsp per day to avoid obesity.

Vegetables/Fruits: Limited amounts of fruits and vegetables should be offered each day. Anything not eaten within 24 hours should be removed. Remember, these should be given as treats and should not exceed 5-10% of your chinchilla's total diet.

Supplements: A salt block as a mineral supplement may be provided. If your chinchilla's diet is appropriately balanced, he/she should not be deficient in any nutrient or vitamin, however, you may want to consider a liquid vitamin C supplement that is easily added to your pets drinking water.





Say NO to...

- Anything containing animal products, they are herbivores!
- Chocolate/Candy have too much sugar
- Corn may cause bloat
- Nuts and seeds are extremely high in fat
- Excess protein can cause liver disease
- Onion/Garlic
- Avacado
- Coffee



Chinchillas maintain their soft, plush fur by taking dust baths. Place dusting powder in a bin and let your chinchilla take a dust bath at least twice a week. Commercial dusting powders and bins are available for their baths. You can remove the bin after the bath and save it for next time.

Environment

A chinchilla needs a safe home that gives him/her a safe place to play, explore, and sleep. They can acclimate well to average household temperatures, but beware not to exceed 80°F. Try to avoid direct sunlight and drafty areas of the house. The cage should be in a quiet area of the house, away from other pets. Humidity should not exceed 40%. Your chinchilla needs a chew proof cage at least 16" x 20" x 16", but get the largest cage size possible. A multi-tiered habitat is recommended because chinchillas love to jump and play.

Pelleted or shredded paper bedding is the suggested material and should be 1-2 inches thick, these types of bedding absorb liquid and odors well. It is okay if you catch your chinchilla nibbling on the bedding. Bedding made from pine or cedar should be avoided. These beddings can be sharp and painful to your pet's feet and are sometimes dusty which may cause respiratory problems. Nest boxes, hide areas, and tunnels are great places for your chinchilla to play and sleep. A large exercise wheel, with a solid floor may be used for keeping your chinchilla active. A stoppered water bottle that attaches to the cage provides a steady supply of water. It also helps prevent water from spilling, thus keeping the bedding dry.

Habitat Maintenance

These are very clean creatures and do not like being in a dirty cage. Wet spots should be removed daily in order to prolong the cleanliness of the environment. The habitat should be cleaned thoroughly at least once per week with mild soap and water. Rinse well, and allow to dry completely before placing bedding back into the habitat. This will avoid the unintentional growth of any molds. The water bottle and food bowl should also be rinsed out with soapy water weekly.

Toys

Pet toys are important to keep a chinchilla from getting bored and to help keep his teeth worn down. There are many commercially available chew proof toys for playing and safe wooden toys and sticks for chewing. It is often best to avoid using pieces of wood or branches you find outside as chew toys. Some types of wood can be toxic or may have come in contact with pesticides.

Behavior

Chinchillas are very social and do well in pairs and small groups. Since they need a lot of social interaction, having a pair of chinchillas is often better than just one. Multiple chinchillas need larger cages, and should be provided with 2 of everything. Keep in mind females tend to be more dominant and more aggressive than males. They are most active at night, dawn, and early evening. They are fast, agile, energetic, and good at climbing and jumping. So keep an eye on them when you have them out of the cage. It isn't impossible to litter train them, although it can be difficult. Chinchillas tend to be very clean, virtually odorless creatures. They rarely bite, and enjoy being petted, but may resist cuddling. They chew on EVERYTHING so it is important to "chinchilla-proof" any areas of the house they will be in and monitor them closely.

