

Caring For a Chinchilla



With curious personalities and soft plush fur, chinchillas make appealing pets for all ages. They sleep most of the day and become active in the evening. Chinchillas are natural acrobats and some find it hard to sit still, others love to be held and petted. It's best to keep two same-sex chinchillas as companions, as they are very social. With good care chinchillas can live over 10 years.

General

Avoid sudden movements and loud noises, so your chinchillas will trust you and let you handle them easily. They are naturally inquisitive and may sniff or gently nibble your fingers. Children should always be supervised when holding chinchillas, to prevent accidental falls and injuries. Daily exercise outside the cage, in a chinchilla-safe room, is vital to good health, and a daily bath in Chinchilla Dust is recommended.

Housing

Chinchillas need room to exercise, so choose the largest cage you can afford. Avoid those with wire floors, as they can seriously injure chinchillas' feet. Your chinchillas will enjoy multi-level cages, or shelves, as well as a hideaway house and a variety of safe wood chew toys. Cover the floor with a layer of safe bedding such as Aspen shavings or Carefresh. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, they contain harmful oils.

Diet

A healthy diet is based on specially formulated chinchilla pellets and good quality Timothy or alfalfa hay, available at all times. Adults may be offered one or two raisins occasionally as a treat and fresh water should always be available in a sipper bottle.

Cleaning

Clean soiled areas daily and change the bedding weekly. Food dishes, water bottles and the cage bottom need washing weekly. Always rinse and dry the cage well before adding fresh bedding.

Fertility

Male chinchillas become sexually mature at around four months of age. To avoid health risks and unwanted babies, it's important to accurately sex and separate chinchillas no later than four months old.

Health

Be alert and consult an exotics vet if you notice signs of illness or injury such as: lack of appetite; drooling; changes in droppings; bald spots; discharge from eyes or nose; wheezing or noisy breathing.

Warnings

Open wire exercise wheels can cause serious injuries and should never be used for chinchillas.

More Info

Chinchillas: A Complete Owner's Manual, by Maike Roder-Thaide. Barron's.
Etc. Chinchilla Page: www.etc-etc.com/chin.htm