

CHINCHILLA CARE INFORMATION

Are chinchillas right for you?

Chinchillas live an average of 10 to 15 years and can often live 20+ years. Give careful consideration to your ability to provide devoted care for the next one to two decades.

Chinchillas are not cuddly lap pets. Even the nicest chinchilla is usually difficult to pick up, and they generally only tolerate being held briefly. They are quick, curious and energetic animals that prefer running around to sitting and having a snuggle. Chinchillas can be engaging, outgoing, social companions who form bonds with their human friends; however, they are not lap pets.

Chinchillas are nocturnal. They prefer to sleep undisturbed during the day, and they need attention and playtime in the evening and nighttime hours.

Chinchillas can be fast, avid and destructive chewers. Given the opportunity, they will chew books, papers, clothes, wood, baseboards, furniture, wires, carpet, plastic, etc. Keeping them cooped up in their cage is not an acceptable solution to prevent chewing. Chinchillas require daily exercise. They need at least one to two hours (more is better) of supervised time out of their cage everyday in a large chin-proofed area.

Chinchillas are typically considered exotics by the veterinary community. A yearly wellness exam is recommended – especially to check their teeth. Vet care, should your chins become sick or injured, can be expensive.

Chinchillas are susceptible to heat stroke. You must have air conditioning, as chins start to become uncomfortable at 70 to 75 degrees, and higher temperatures can be dangerous and even fatal.

Chinchillas are highly social tribe animals and need the companionship of their own species. It is unnatural for them to live alone. Chinchillas should always be kept in at least pairs, either the same gender or spayed and neutered. Introductions between single chinchillas can be very successful if handled properly and patiently. Please ask us for more information on chinchilla introductions and check out <http://www.chincare.com/HealthLifestyle/Introductions.htm>.

CAGE

There is no such thing as a habitat that is too big. Your chinchillas will be spending a majority of their time in their cage, so it should be as big as possible. It should be safe, roomy, comfortable and interesting. **The cage should be a minimum of four feet tall, three feet wide and two feet deep.** The cage should not have any ladders or tubes. Several solid wooden platform perches should be provided, about six to eight inches apart. Any levels in the cage should be solid, not wire. Animals should never be made to stand on wire. Standing on wire is extremely painful and will cause wounds, sores, foot deformities and arthritis. Wire levels can be made safe by covering them completely with ceramic tiles.

We highly recommend the Chinchilla Mansion from Quality Cages – preferably with ½” x 1” mesh. The website is [HYPERLINK "http://www.qualitycage.com/"](http://www.qualitycage.com/)**www.qualitycage.com**.

The Midwest Critter Nation Double Level Cage (Model #162) is also an acceptable choice.

Talk to us before you buy! Please let us help you choose an appropriate habitat. If you are interested in a habitat other than the Chinchilla Mansion or Critter Nation, let's discuss it first. There are many cages that are the proper dimensions but have other problems that make them unsuitable for chinchillas. We can save you money and hassle by discussing your options before purchase.

Clean your chinchillas' habitat at least once a week.

BEDDING

Use Carefresh Bedding. It is the safest and healthiest bedding choice for your chinchillas. It is available at most pet stores and through Small Angels Rescue. Aspen bedding is an acceptable second choice. Never use pine, cedar, sawdust, corn cob bedding, chlorophyll bedding or cat litter. Pine and cedar are poisonous to all animals! We have 50 Liter bags of Carefresh bedding available for purchase through the rescue (cheaper than the pet store).

HIDE-AWAY

Chinchillas enjoy a cozy space for sleeping and relaxation. Provide a wooden nesting box for each chinchilla in the habitat. Do not use plastic igloos or hide-aways. Do not use the edible "Snak Shack" hide-aways. They are made from compressed pine, alfalfa and honey and are extremely unhealthy.

WATER BOTTLE

Use a 16 ounce (minimum) hanging water bottle that has an angled stainless steel sipper tube with a ball bearing in the spout. A glass water bottle is strongly recommended, but a plastic water bottle is acceptable. Glass water bottles can often be found with bird supplies. If you choose to use a plastic water bottle, you should use a water bottle guard to keep the chinchillas from puncturing the bottle with their teeth. Give your chinchillas fresh water everyday. Filtered water is strongly recommended, especially if you are on city water.

FOOD

Provide a heavy ceramic crock-type food dish or a metal dish that clips onto the cage. Do not use plastic. Chinchilla pellets should be plain. There should not be any seeds, nuts, corn, dried fruit or other bits mixed in with the pellets. We recommend **Oxbow Chinchilla Deluxe**. Oxbow is available from [HYPERLINK "http://www.oxbowhay.com/"](http://www.oxbowhay.com/) www.oxbowhay.com and a variety of other online retailers. Oxbow is also available at some pet stores, feed stores, veterinary practices and through Small Angels Rescue.

Do not use Kaytee, Hartz, L&M or Nutriphase products. They contain a controversial antioxidant preservative called Ethoxyquin which is linked to cancer, organ damage, birth defects and other serious health problems. Large quantities of fresh foods are not recommended for chinchillas. Treats, such as goji berries or a small piece of dried fruit, should be given sparingly – one or two small pieces per day at the most.

Do not give your chinchillas a mineral or salt wheel. They are not necessary or healthy. Mineral and salt wheels are made with glue, and salt wheels are bleached. You can give your chinchillas natural wood chews that have not been artificially colored.

HAY

It is vital that chinchillas have unlimited access to timothy hay or orchard grass (and once in a while alfalfa hay) at all times. Hay promotes a healthy digestive system and keeps their teeth worn down.

EXERCISE and PLAY

Chinchillas are extremely athletic. They need time out of their habitat everyday to run around in a large chinchilla proofed area. Chinchillas need at least one to two hours of daily play time. More is better!

Many chinchillas enjoy hammocks. We encourage you to support these independent, high quality hammock makers:

www.dearpiehammocks.com

www.wonderrodent.com

[HYPERLINK "http://www.javakittie.com/"](http://www.javakittie.com/) www.javakittie.com

[HYPERLINK "http://www.andieshammocks.webs.com/"](http://www.andieshammocks.webs.com/) www.andieshammocks.webs.com

www.freewebs.com/theratstash

Mention Small Angels Rescue when you order from DearPie and WonderRodent, and a donation will be made to the rescue! JavaKittie also donates to rescue groups.

Check out www.busybunny.com www.busybunny.com www.busybunny.com and www.forotheotherlivingthings.com and www.leithpetwerks.com www.leithpetwerks.com for lots of fun, safe and edible toys that are appropriate for chinchillas. You can also check out www.tjschinchillasupplies.com www.tjschinchillasupplies.com for general chinchilla supplies.

Many chinchillas also enjoy “watching” TV when they do have to be in their cage.

Chinchillas need and enjoy an exercise wheel or flying saucer. The exercise wheel should be at least 15 inches in diameter. It must be metal, not plastic. It should provide a solid running surface. Never use an exercise wheel with bars/rungs. Their feet, legs and/or tail can slip between the rungs, get caught and break.

We recommend the Flying Saucer or the 15 inch Chin Spin from Quality Cages. The website is www.qualitycage.com.

NEVER put your chinchillas in an exercise ball. Exercise balls are dangerous and stressful. In a ball their vision is compromised. They always run into furniture and walls, which they don't see coming. It's like a car crash for them. They back up to try and get away and end up crashing into something else. It's very stressful. In addition, paws can get pinched/broken in the air slits. Chinchillas can become over-heated. If they go to the bathroom in the ball, they have to run in their own waste. Also, their great joy in life is exploring and checking things out with their paws and noses. They can't do that in a plastic bubble. Provide a large, safe play area for your chinchillas and trash the ball!

DUST BATH

Chinchillas require a dust bath to keep their fur clean and properly groomed. The bathing dust/sand can be purchased online and at most pet stores. Offer access to the dust bath daily. You can reuse the sand as long as it is clean and not soiled by urine, hay, food, etc. Please use only unscented bathing dust/sand.

HANDLING

Before you pick your chinchillas up, make sure you have clean, dry hands that do not smell like food. Make sure your chinchillas are fully awake and aware of your presence. Even the tamest chinchilla can be tricky to pick up. Place both hands securely around their body, supporting their rear, and gently lift them up. Hold your chinchilla securely against your chest.

Please visit www.chincare.com for more detailed chinchilla care information.

We welcome questions!

Please email chinchillas@smallangelsrescue.org

or call 301-668-0404 for more information. You can see our adoptable animals online at www.smallangels.petfinder.com.