

# CHINCHILLA CARE INFORMATION

Small Angels Rescue • 301-668-0404 • [www.smallangelsrescue.org](http://www.smallangelsrescue.org)

Chinchillas are quick, curious and athletic animals. They live an average of 15 years or more, so they are a long-term commitment. Chinchillas are typically not cuddly lap pets. Even the nicest chinchilla can be tricky to pick up, and they prefer running around to having a snuggle. Chinchillas are nocturnal. They prefer to sleep during the day, and they need attention and playtime in the evening. Chinchillas are fast and avid chewers. They will chew books, papers, clothes, wood, baseboards, furniture, wires, cords, 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 of supervised time out of their cage everyday in a large chin-proofed area. Chinchillas are susceptible to heat stroke. You must have air conditioning, as chins start to become uncomfortable at 70 to 75 degrees. 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 different genders if spayed and neutered. Introductions between single chinchillas can be very successful if handled properly and patiently.

## **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. 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 with Magic Mats (available in pet stores), ceramic or vinyl tiles, cardboard (like cut cereal boxes), or other similar material. We recommend the Chinchilla Mansion from Quality Cages ([www.qualitycage.com](http://www.qualitycage.com)). We also recommend the Midwest Cat Playpen, Model #132, available from various retailers online. Clean the cage at least twice a week.

## **BEDDING**

Use Carefresh Bedding. It is the safest and healthiest bedding choice for your chinchillas. It is made from recycled wood pulp and is available at most pet stores. 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 for \$13.99 a bag plus tax.

## **HIDEAWAY**

Chinchillas enjoy a cozy space for sleeping and relaxation. Provide a wooden nesting box. Do not use plastic.

## **WATER BOTTLE**

Use a 16-ounce or 32-ounce hanging water bottle that has an angled stainless steel sipper tube with a ball bearing in the spout. A glass water bottle is preferable, but a plastic water bottle is acceptable. If your chinchillas chew through their water bottle, which they are apt to do, you will need a water bottle guard. Give your chinchillas fresh water everyday. Filtered water is best.

## **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 [www.oxbowhay.com](http://www.oxbowhay.com), [www.ferretstore.com](http://www.ferretstore.com), and a variety of other online retailers. Oxbow is also available at some pet 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 a small piece of dried fruit, should be given sparingly. 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 and/or dried apple branches from apple trees that have not been sprayed with pesticides.

## **HAY**

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

## **EXERCISE and PLAY**

Chinchillas need and enjoy an exercise wheel or flying saucer. The exercise wheel should be at least 15 inches in diameter. It should provide a solid running surface. Never use an exercise wheel with metal or plastic 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 ([www.qualitycage.com](http://www.qualitycage.com)). Chinchillas are very athletic. They need time out of their habitat every day to run around in a large chinchilla-proofed area. Chinchillas need at least one to two hours of daily playtime. Hammocks, tunnels, and perches can be a lot of fun. Many chinchillas also enjoy "watching" TV when they do have to be in their cage. NEVER put your chinchillas in an exercise ball. Exercise balls are dangerous and stressful for all animals, and they are completely unsuitable for chinchillas.

## **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 approximately every other day. You can reuse the sand as long as it is clean and not soiled by urine, hay, food, etc.

## **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](http://www.chincare.com) for more detailed chinchilla care information.

## **Interested in chinchillas?**

Please e-mail [chinchillas@smallangelsrescue.org](mailto:chinchillas@smallangelsrescue.org) or call 301-668-0404. You can see our adoptable animals online at [www.smallangels.petfinder.com](http://www.smallangels.petfinder.com).