

# ***Chinchillas***

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Chinchillas were domesticated for their soft plush coats, and these adorable big-eared animals are a pleasure to watch and touch. Chinchillas who are socialized to people are very affectionate and enjoy being petted. They will greet their owner with a soft chuckle.

Chinchillas are very active and play by running around the room. They will amuse you with their antics as they bounce off the walls! Because they are so active, they need at least an hour a day out of their cage to play.

Chinchillas make great interactive pets for adults and older children.

## **Feeding**

Chinchillas are strict herbivores. Chinchilla pellets make up their main diet, and they also need hay for roughage every day. They can also have leafy greens such as dandelion leaves, bok choy, kale, cilantro, parsley and leaf lettuce. Treats should be given only occasionally.

## **Housing**

Chinchillas need a cage at least 36" X 24" X 24" tall, and the bigger the better to provide room for them to move around. Solid floors are safer for their legs than wire floors. For bedding, use pet litter made of recycled paper or organic pellets such as Carefresh. Do not use clay litter or cedar shavings since they cause respiratory infection. Chinchillas tend to use one corner as a bathroom, and you can put a litter box there. Chinchillas do not tolerate the heat and must be kept below 80 degrees F. In warm weather or if you keep your house at a warm temperature, a chinchilla cooler should be placed in the cage for the chinchilla to lay on when it starts to get too warm.

## **Accessories**

Chinchillas need a glass water bottle to prevent chewing holes in them, a non-tip food dish or hopper, a hayrack, a mineral salt wheel, and a bath house for their dust baths. They also need a house to sleep in. For exercise they need a large solid-surface or mesh exercise wheel. They also enjoy chew toys to keep their teeth shaved down and branches to climb on.

## **Sanitation**

Clean the cage and accessories weekly. Be sure to scrub all parts of the water bottle.

## **Maintenance**

Give your chinchillas a dust bath twice a week outside its cage. If you watch this amusing show you should wear a painter's mask to avoid breathing the dust.

## **Health care**

With proper care and diet, chinchillas tend to be very healthy. The most common problem is ringworm. Veterinary Pet Insurance ([www.petinsurance.com](http://www.petinsurance.com)) now offers health insurance policies for chinchillas.

### **Special needs**

Chinchillas do not like to be held and instead like to jump to their owner's lap when they feel like it. They do not have claws and so cannot scratch! All rooms where your chinchilla is allowed to play must be "chinchilla-proofed" to protect electrical cords, remove items that you don't want chewed, and block off access to hiding places. If you have cords laying across your floor, tack them on the wall at least a foot above the floor.

### **Life cycle**

Chinchillas live an average of 8 to 10 years but can live up to 20 years. The gestation period averages 111 days and the average litter size is 2. The babies are born fully furred with their eyes open and can be weaned at 8-12 weeks.

### **Expert Help**

If you have questions about your chinchilla, do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to help you choose a chinchilla care book for more complete information. You, your veterinarian, and the staff here at the store will form the team, which will be responsible for your chinchilla's well being.

### **Supplies Checklist**

Large cage	Mineral salt wheel
Bedding/litter	Bath house for dust baths
Litter box (optional)	Bath dust
Glass water bottle	Sleeping house
Non-tip food dish or hopper	Exercise wheel
Premium chinchilla food	Climbing branches
Hay	Hay rack
	Chew toys

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