



Caring for Chinchillas

Chinchillas are adorable creatures that have extremely soft fur, but are you ready for a long-term commitment? The average lifespan of a pet chinchilla is 12-15 years! Chinchillas are most active at sunset and sunrise. They will spend most of their days napping. These cute little rodents are very social and enjoy the company of other chinchillas or the company of their human companions. Chinchillas are timid and may take some time to warm up to their new family. Once comfortable however, chinchillas are extremely energetic and playful companions. Chins also are very quiet pets who rarely vocalize.

Diet

A chinchilla's diet is very simple: provide lots of timothy hay, good quality chinchilla pellets and fresh water.

Because chins have very sensitive digestive systems it is important to keep the diet simple and consistent. Chinchillas have quite a sweet tooth and will beg for treats, but do not give in. Chins should only have treats on a limited basis. Each day your chinchilla should be allowed only one of the following treats: 1 raisin, 1 dried banana chip, 1 uncooked piece of spaghetti, 1 small chunk of apple, 1 dried papaya cube, or 1 small piece of shredded wheat cereal.

Health

Chinchillas do not require any vaccinations. The normal color of a chinchilla's teeth is orange. If a chinchilla has white teeth, there could be a possible medical problem. Chins can suffer heat strokes if they are maintained at temperatures above 80 degrees Fahrenheit; the perfect temperature for a chinchilla is 70 degrees. It is also important to make sure that chinchillas have some type of wood to chew on so that their teeth do not become overgrown.

Housing

A chinchilla's house should be at least 36" high, 24" wide and 24" long. Because chinchillas are curious animals who enjoy hopping and running around their cages, it is important to provide a cage with lots of ramps and shelves.

Make sure to provide a cage with a solid bottom to avoid injury and provide a surface that is easy to clean. Chinchillas love to keep clean, and they should be provided with a dust bath at least three times a week. One inch of chinchilla dust should be provided in a bowl or in a chinchilla dust bathhouse. It is also important to provide a wooden sleeping box and a chinchilla safe exercise wheel (a wheel with no spokes).

Fun Facts

Chinchillas can jump almost 6 feet vertically.

In the wild chinchillas bathe in volcanic ash.

Baby chins are born fully furred with their eyes open.

Both the mother and father chinchilla help take care of the babies.