



## CHINCHILLA CARE TIPS

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**CAGES** – Chinchillas need a cage with space to run, jump between levels, and play on a safe wheel. Many of the cages marketed for chinchillas are traditionally too small, and get more cramped once you get their goodies (wheel, food dish, etc.) inside. A great option is a Ferret Nation or Critter Nation. You can also make chinchilla cages, but you must be mindful of the flooring (no wire) and to use untreated wood, because they will eat it.

**BEDDING** - Recycled paper bedding (Carefresh, Kaytee, etc.) is a great option, because it has less dust than wood-shavings. A layer of newspaper underneath the bedding allows for easier cleanup, and will avoid urine buildup. As an alternative to traditional bedding, fleece is often used because it can be washed and reused. There are many resources that give tips for using fleece online. Some chinchillas will eat fleece and paper, so if that's the case with yours, stick with aspen bedding!

**FOOD** – Chinchillas need raw Timothy Hay and pellets made from Timothy Hay, both of which can be purchased in most pet supply stores (Petco and PetSmart). Look for pellets with no added color or dried fruit, nuts or seeds (high in sugar and fat content). Hay keeps their teeth from overgrowing, and loose hay (not cubes) should be used. We recommend hay and/or pellets from Kaytee, KMS Hayloft, Oxbow, Sherwood Pet Health and Small Pet Select.

In addition to hay and pellets, chinchillas can have many different kinds of dried fruit or nuts for snacks, including raisins, cranberries, bananas, papaya, peanuts, etc. These are goodies that should be limited.

**VITAMIN C** – Chinchillas need Vitamin C to maintain their health. They should have between 10 - 30 mg per day. Sherwood Pet Health and Oxbow make a vitamin C supplement, or you can buy adult (not children's), chewable tablets (the less sugar the better, so fake sugar) and break them down into smaller portions (size depends on overall mg of the tablet) to give the approximate dosage needed. Avoid Vitamin C drops added to water (there is no way to ensure they get an adequate amount and it changes the flavor of the water often causing them to drink less). The drops also cause a slimy buildup in their water bottle.

**GENERAL CARE** – With proper diet and cage cleaning, the likelihood of illness is decreased. Chinchillas are nocturnal, so it's best to keep them in an area of the home where they can have peace and quiet during the day, and not keep you awake at night. Chinchillas also need to be kept in temperatures of 65-72 degrees. They are especially prone to heat stroke, and should never be in temps above 75 degrees. Chinchillas also CANNOT get wet, and must bathe in dust (crushed pumice stone) instead of water. You can purchase the dust online or in pet stores. Typically they need to bathe 1-2 times a week, but that can vary based on humidity in your home, etc. Chinchillas do not need annual vet visits, but we do recommend finding a vet before you need one, as it can be difficult to locate a chinchilla-savvy vet. Chinchillas live an average of 20+ years, so please be sure you're ready to commit to their health and happiness for years to come.

**CAGE-FREE TIME** – Chinchillas LOVE to get out of their cage. This is one of the places they'll interact with you most. We recommend letting them play in a secure room, away from power cords or places they could be injured. The bathroom is a great option (make sure to close the lid on the commode) or even a large, walk-in shower. Chinchillas often like chewing on wood, so be mindful of base boards, cabinets, etc. If you don't have a space you can allow them to play, please don't get a chinchilla. We also recommend a large wheel (without a center spoke, and with a solid, metal floor) to hang in their cage so they can "run" any time.

**PLAY W/HUMANS** – Chinchillas are super soft, and humans love cuddling them, but generally chins don't love the idea of cuddles. Please be mindful of how your chinchilla wants to interact with you. It's always fun to sit in the room where they are enjoying out-of-cage time and allow them to use you as a spring board.