

Feeding Your Chinchilla

Chinchillas have a very sensitive digestive system which requires a mix of both digestible and indigestible fibre. It is very important that the diet you choose contains both types of fibre. The indigestible fibre helps to produce the hard faecal pellets and the digestible fibre aids the formation of soft pellets called caecotrophs. Chinchillas will then eat the caecotrophs and their systems extract essential nutrition as the digestible fibre passes through for the second time. Failure to provide your pet with these beneficial fibres can rapidly lead to illness or death.

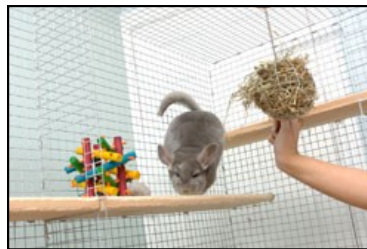


We highly recommend feeding plenty of hay in conjunction with a good quality pellet based diet such as the Burgess Excel Chinchilla range. Such a diet helps to eliminate selective feeding ensuring that your chinchilla is taking in the correct requirements. Treats can be given in the form of fruit and a small amount of greens.

Your chinchilla's food must remain low in fat and they must **never** be given sunflower seeds or peanuts.

Housing Requirement

Chinchillas are busy, active and inquisitive creatures that enjoy lots of space in which to play. They require a large mesh cage with a separate tray at the bottom. This allows urine and faeces to be removed without disturbing your pets environment. This tray should be covered with some form of absorbent material like newspaper or dust-free wood chippings. Within the cage you should have a small sleeping area where your pet can go to snuggle up and feel safe. Special nesting boxes are available but a good quality cardboard box will be just as good. Ensure there are no staples within the construction as your chinchilla may chew through the box leading to some damage of your pet. They do like to chew so untreated wooden treats are advised.



Also within the enclosure there should be play space e.g. shelves to sit on, toys to climb on, and branches to crawl across. Ramps and ladders are always a good idea, especially in a large cage.

Care and Company

Chinchillas are social creatures and should be housed in pairs, single sex or polygamous groups (1 male per 5 females).

When it comes to human interaction they are fairly timid to start with, but with lots of gentle frequent handling they become more confident and relaxed.

They very rarely bite but can show other symptoms of fear. They may urinate or show "fur slip". This is when patches of fur are shed, leaving a smooth area of skin. This happens when are handled roughly or are picked up by their tail. It is a sure sign of distress.



Chinchillas have very dense fur that requires a sand bath at least once a week to maintain a healthy coat. Commercial dust products are available at most pet stores. Ensure you get one especially for Chinchillas. The bath should be put in the cage for ten minutes at a time and removed immediately afterwards. Chinchillas should never be brushed or bathed in water.

Chinchillas originate from a cool climate so they need to be kept in similar conditions. Their area must be kept at a constant cool temperature but free from draughts. They are very susceptible to heat stroke, so they need to be away from radiators and kept out of direct sunlight.

A sign that your chinchilla maybe overheating is very red ears. This happens when blood is diverted to the ears to allow it to cool down.

In cases like this veterinary attention must be sought immediately.



Please ensure you are fully aware of what a chinchilla requires. They are much better suited to an adult keeper as they require delicate handling and minimal stress.

Plenty of research should be undertaken before the purchase of a chinchilla. Ensure you have the time and can give the attention required for any new pet you may acquire.

CHINCHILLA FACT FILE

Male : Buck
Female : Doe
Young : Kits
Life Span : 10 - 20 years
Gestation Period : 111– 113 days
Litter size : 1-6 Kits
Weaning Age : 8 - 10 weeks
Eyes open : At birth
Sexual maturity : 4 - 12 months



Abbey House Veterinary Hospital
Commercial Street
Morley
Leeds
LS27 8AG
Phone: 0113 2525818
Email vets@abbeyvetspets.co.uk



CHINCHILLA CARE GUIDE



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