



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Part of *Independence Matters*

Guide to Chinchillas

Latin Name – Chinchilla Lanigera/Chinchilla
Chinchilla

Scientific Order - Rodentia

Average Adult Size – 12 inches (tail can be 3-11
inches)

Average Life Span – 10-15 years

Diet – Herbivore



General Information

Chinchillas are known as 'crepuscular' animals, meaning they are most active during the twilight hours (from dusk until dawn).

They belong to the Chinchillidae family and their original habitat is in The Andes Mountain range in South America, although now they are mainly found in the wild in Chile.

The name Chinchilla means 'Little Chincha', named after the Indian tribe of the Andes who used to hunt them for their fur.

Behaviour

Chinchillas are very active, fast animals that love to leap and hop around when engaging in play. When co habiting they will engage in 'chat' and will nuzzle one another.



They are highly intelligent, inquisitive and lovable animals, which develop their own distinct and gentle personality when treated correctly.

Chinchillas like to gnaw to file their teeth and will chew on ANYTHING, so keep them away from wires or any plants that may be poisonous, and anything you may hold valuable!!

Equipment Required



- Cage/Habitat- The cage should be a minimum of 18-24 inches deep, 24-36 inches wide and 24-36 inches high, if keeping only one chinchilla. It must have plenty of hiding places and levels. Keep cage in a warm well ventilated area, free from draughts and away from direct sunlight. Chinchillas are an indoor pet and must never be kept outside.
- Water bottle- A small water bottle that attaches to the side of the cage is ideal. No need for anything too big, one that is used for a mouse or small rodent is perfect.

DO NOT use tap water, only fill the water bottle with water that has been boiled and left to cool.

- Food Bowl- This will need to be heavy and secure enough to support the Chinchillas weight, as they like to sit on the rim whilst they eat as it makes them feel more secure.

- Bedding materials – There should be a suitable house for the Chinchilla to hide away in, preferably a solid, untreated pine wood house. Provide plenty of soft bedding that is safe to be chewed, e.g. good quality hay, or Norfolk Industries paper flakes bedding - www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/flaked-paper-bedding/



- Food – Chinchillas must have a good balanced diet consisting of Chinchilla pellets, and good quality hay, you **MUST NOT** feed your Chinchilla any food that is designed for other animals, this could upset their digestive tract and does not contain the right vitamins and minerals and could lead to them being very unwell. As long as you are providing the correct pellets, treats, such as a very small chunk, (1cmx1cm) of apple, strawberry or pear should be given **VERY** sparingly. Do not give your Chinchilla vegetables. If a treat stick or calcium stick is given, do not give any other treats until the stick is finished.

- Toys and chews- Provide plenty of safe, chewable material, e.g. wooden chews, wood stacks, tunnels etc. this fulfils their inquisitive nature and gnawing habit! An ideal option (depending on the size of your Chinchilla) is the Norfolk Industries 'Chewy' tubes complete with bedding, to provide hideaway place and help with chewing ability. See product details at www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/nesting-tubes/



- Animal House – such as Norfolk Industries Medium sized Animal house, see product details at <https://www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/animal-house/animal-houses/>



- Provide a sand/dust bath for the Chinchilla to roll around in, this keeps their coats well groomed.

Grooming and Hygiene

- ❖ Groom your chinchillas once a week to keep their skin and coats healthy.
- ❖ Check for overgrown teeth once a week.
- ❖ Provide a dust bath for your chinchilla to groom itself in, keep an eye on it as it can sometimes be used as a toilet! Make sure to check and replace the dust daily.



Maintenance Tasks



- ✓ Daily dump out the crumbs from the pellets before you refill food. Refill water if needed
- ✓ Sweep droppings off shelves and empty houses and hammocks daily, wipe down walls behind and near cage if they have been sprayed, change the dust/ sand in the bath if needed.
- ✓ Weekly wash water bottle and food dish. Sand down any dirty wood shelves, houses, or toys. Clean out sand/dust bath and replace with clean material.
- ✓ Every couple months, wash full cage thoroughly with cage disinfectant, wash or replace wooden shelves and accessories.

General Health Conditions

- Bloat- caused by an excessive gas build up in the gastrointestinal tract. Causes of bloat are a rapid change in diet, feeding gas producing foods, infections or obstructions in the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms are severe pain, gurgling in the stomach, laying down, rolling, and a reluctance to move. Seek treatment from a Veterinarian.
- Diarrhoea- loose stools, caused by poor diet or stress. Treat by consulting a veterinarian to determine cause.
- Respiratory problems- Signs include sneezing, a discharge from the nose, and discharge from the eyes (conjunctivitis). Seek medical advice from a veterinarian.
- Overgrown teeth (malocclusion) – treated by consulting a veterinarian to trim teeth.



General Care Information

Chinchillas make great animals for older children and adults. They're easy to look after, friendly and inquisitive. With plenty of care and attention they can become very tame. Chinchillas are timid by nature and are very sensitive to rough handling so they're not suitable animals for very young children.

As they're nocturnal, chinchillas sleep throughout the day and become active in the evening.

Whilst chinchillas can be kept on their own, keeping them in single sex pairs provides them with companionship and it means they can snuggle up with each other at nap times. If you'd like to keep more than one chinchilla, make sure you



buy them at the same time as they'll already be friends. It can be difficult to introduce chinchillas to one another later on.

Handling- Never pick up or grab a Chinchilla by the tail, this could lead to it snapping or breaking off.



Slide your hand under the Chinchilla's chest and gently lift while supporting the hind end with the other hand. Cradle the animal next to your chest.

Be careful not to grab the fur. One of the Chinchillas' defences is throw off hair.

Temperature- Chinchillas are an indoor pet only, and should never be kept outside. The cage should be situated in a quiet, light and airy room with a temperature between 15 and 25 degrees Celsius, out of draughts and direct sunlight. They can become susceptible to heatstroke if the temperature climbs above 25 degrees Celsius, so make sure the cage is in a cooler environment at warmer times in the year.

Information supplied by –



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