



General care

As a rule chinchillas are hardy animals that rarely become ill. Should you be concerned about your chinchilla's health you should consult your veterinary surgeon. Regular checks for overgrown teeth and nails should be made.

Chinchillas have the densest coat of any land mammal with 60 hairs from a single root. To keep the coat in peak condition they should be supplied with a dust bath. The dust bath should be filled to a depth of 5cm with chinchilla sand (a mined volcanic dust). The bath should be placed in the cage for 10 minutes each day (at a time when your chinchilla is awake). Your chinchilla will roll in the dust bath to clean his coat.

Grooming - Grooming not only helps to keep your chinchilla healthy and clean but helps you to bond with your pet.

Your chinchilla should be groomed at least once a week. Your pet shop will advise you on a suitable brush and comb.



Shopping List

Cage	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food dish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tray	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelf	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/>
Litter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bottle brush	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nest box	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinchilla sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hay rack	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dust bath	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cuttle fish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brush and comb	<input type="checkbox"/>	A book on chinchilla care	<input type="checkbox"/>

This leaflet is produced by the Pet Care Trust, the national charity that promotes the benefits of pet ownership and education. For more information, go to www.petcare.org.uk, or phone 01234 273933.



Remember you must never release your pet into the wild.



CARING FOR YOUR CHINCHILLA

Chinchillas are medium-sized rodents with a peaceful, friendly nature that makes them ideal pets. They are active in the evening but are not purely nocturnal.

Chinchillas are friendly and inquisitive with a dense, highly attractive coat.

Chinchillas are native to the Andes Mountains of Chile in South America.

An adult chinchilla will measure about 25 cm long excluding the tail.

The average life expectancy of a chinchilla is 10-15 years.





Choosing and buying your chinchilla

There are many colours available such as light/medium grey, beige, black velvet, mosaic, silver and white.

Whichever variety you decide on, your chinchilla should be 8 weeks old and preferably at least 12 weeks.

A healthy chinchilla should be:

- ❖ Bright and alert
- ❖ Have no signs of discharge from eye, ears, mouth and nose
- ❖ Have a clean anal area
- ❖ Have a glossy coat with no bald patches and no have sores on the skin
- ❖ Should have no signs of breathing problems
- ❖ Should move around the cage easily.



Housing

Chinchillas of either sex may be kept singly, but if you wish to keep a pair they must be of a single sex and must be purchased as babies and introduced to their accommodation at the same time - otherwise they may fight. Accommodation should be as large as possible and be escape-proof.

Ideally the cage should be of wire-mesh construction with a raised wire-mesh floor to prevent the coat from becoming soiled. A removable tray placed under the floor will make it easier to keep the cage clean. This can be covered with shavings or cat litter.

Chinchillas love to climb and the ideal cage will have different levels.

Chinchillas do not like damp or draughty conditions, nor should the cage be placed in direct sunlight. Chinchillas will start to suffer if the environmental temperature rises above 20°C, however they can tolerate the cold within reason.

A nest box with some hay bedding should be provided.

A chinchilla enclosure must be furnished with an interesting selection of natural non-toxic wood branches, shelves, pipes and gnaw blocks of cuttlefish or mineral stone.

Chinchillas become bored easily so it is worthwhile changing or moving cage contents on a regular basis.



Feeding and Water

Your chinchilla should be fed on a diet of specially prepared chinchilla pellets, which are long enough to allow your chinchilla to sit up and hold the pellet between its front legs.

It is important to provide good quality hay ad lib to provide essential roughage.

As a treat a few raisins or other dried fruit or a small piece of bread could be offered, but only in small amounts fed occasionally.

Any changes to the diet must be made gradually. Fresh water should be provided daily in a chew proof gravity feed water bottle.



Handling

Chinchillas do not respond kindly to rough handling, but if approached correctly they will respond to gentle handling and rarely bite.

To accustom your chinchilla to being handled, first just place your hand into the cage and your chinchilla will then get used to you. Gently pick up your chinchilla with the whole body supported, by placing one hand placed behind the shoulders and the other hand underneath your chinchilla. Hold your chinchilla close to your chest with one hand holding the base of the tail gently but firmly.

Chinchillas can be allowed out into a chinchilla-safe room. Make sure that toilet doors are closed as they drown easily.