

chinchilla

care sheet



Chinchillas have an inquisitive and gentle nature, but also have a lot of energy.

facts

average adult size:	12 inches long
average life span:	up to 10+ years with proper care
diet:	herbivore



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

diet

A well-balanced chinchilla diet consists of:

- High-quality chinchilla pellets and limited amounts of vegetables and fruits.
- Provide Timothy hay at all times.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water, changed daily.
- Do **not** feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar and high-fat treats.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your chinchilla:

- Fresh food (pellets and hay) and water should always be available.
- A limited amount of vegetables and fruits can be given daily, but should not exceed 10% of their total diet.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

housing

- Chinchillas acclimate well to average household temperatures, not to exceed 80°F; be cautious of extreme temperature changes. The habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- A large multi-tiered habitat is recommended because chinchillas love to jump and play; wire habitats with a solid bottom are required to protect their feet. The space between the wires should not be bigger than 1". It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
- 1 to 2" of bedding should be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes high-quality paper bedding, crumbled paper bedding or hardwood shavings. Cedar-based products are not recommended.
- Different types of small animals should **not** be housed together.

normal behavior

and characteristics

- Play during the night and rest during the day (nocturnal).
- A well-socialized chinchilla likes to be cuddled and carried.
- Chew on objects to maintain all their teeth, which grow continuously; ensure they have plenty of wood chew sticks or mineral chews.
- Chinchillas have a very fragile rib cage. Be gentle when handling them and do not squeeze their rib cage.

habitat maintenance

- Clean and disinfect the habitat and its contents at least once a week with a 3% bleach solution. Rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the chinchilla back into the habitat.
- Remove wet spots daily; change bedding at least once a week, or more often as necessary.

and hygiene

- Chinchillas require a dust bath at least twice a week; remove dust after 15 to 30 minutes. Fur may be brushed with a soft brush.
- Avoid getting your chinchilla wet.
- Consult with a veterinarian if a chinchilla's teeth seem too long.
- Chinchillas are born with white teeth, but over time, their teeth turn yellow; cleaning is not necessary.

signs of a healthy animal

- Active, alert and sociable
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Healthy fur and clear eyes
- Breathing is unlabored
- Walks normally

grooming

red flags

- Weight loss
- Abnormal hair loss
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Distressed breathing
- Lethargic
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Skin lesions
- Overgrown teeth

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Diarrhea	Loose stool caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing or other illness.	Consult with a veterinarian to determine cause and treatment.
Eye irritations	From dust, bedding or infection.	Consult with a veterinarian.
Heat stroke	An emergency condition; symptoms include heavy panting, seizures, loss of consciousness.	Can be fatal; consult with a veterinarian immediately.
Malocclusion	Overgrown teeth.	Consult with a veterinarian to possibly have teeth trimmed regularly.
Mites	External parasites that cause chinchillas to lose patches of hair.	Consult with a veterinarian for treatment.
Ringworm	Skin infection caused by a fungus.	Consult with a veterinarian for treatment.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- High-quality chinchilla food
- Timothy hay
- Treats
- Bedding
- Food bowl/water bottle
- Exercise wheel
- Hideaway place
- Toys
- Wood chews
- Mineral chews
- Dust and dust bath
- Indoor playpen
- Chew tubes
- Book about chinchillas

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on chinchillas and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all small animals are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis, Rat Bite Fever and *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your small animal or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for small animals and should consider not having a small animal as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about small animals and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

