

## Small Pet Rodent Awareness Week



### Chinchilla Care Sheet

#### WHAT IS A CHINCHILLA?

Chinchillas are beautiful creatures who are classed as exotics, and known for their amazing fur and big saucer ears. Chinchillas can live up to 20 years and can become very tame if socialised well. They are more active at dusk and dawn so their activity patterns may not suit all families. Chinchillas like company so are often in pairs or trios.

#### KEY INFORMATION

- Lifespan: 15-20 years
- Size: 28-49 cm
- Colours: grey, black or white
- Nocturnal: no they are crepuscular (meaning most active at dawn and dusk)

#### DIET

Chinchillas are herbivores so need a chinchilla hard feed - for example Science Selective, dried herbs and unlimited hay. Hay helps prevent dental problems which can be common. Chinchillas are prone to diabetes so avoid anything sugary. Chinchillas require unlimited fresh water in a water bottle with a metal tube.

#### ACCOMMODATION

Indoors in a cage - min. size of 95 x 63 x 159 cm. For example Savic Royal Suite 95.

Chinchillas need a large cage to live in with multiple levels made of metal or kiln dried pine. Chinchillas are avid chewers so cannot be housed in a plastic or wooden cage or they will quickly eat their way out. wire/metal cages are the most suitable. Chinchillas are very temperature sensitive so need to avoid hot rooms, drafts and being near a window or they might develop heat stroke. A marble slab in the cage is a good way to keep them cool. Chinchillas themselves don't smell, but the toilet area in the cage can have an odour if not regularly changed. Chinchillas need hides, huts and hammocks for sleeping but these needs to be an anti-pill fleece if made of fabric.

#### ENRICHMENT

Provide a solid surface exercise wheel- for example a metal TicTac wheel, min. 16". Provide two wheels for larger groups.

Not all chinchillas use wheels, however it is a good way to keep them entertained if they do. Chinchillas enjoy time out of their cage but it must be supervised to prevent any accidents such as chewing cables.

Chinchillas need access to a sandbath to help to keep their fur clean, especially as they cannot get wet or be washed as it can make them become very unwell. Chinchillas sometimes make little chirping noises when happy but are generally silent.

### **HANDLING**

Chinchillas aren't always keen to be handled but rarely bite you - they can be quite speedy though so just be careful not to accidentally drop them.

Chinchillas can happily perch on you whilst having a run around outside their cage and will take treats from your hand. As with other prey animals, they can sometimes be jumpy so they're not suitable for young children or homes with curious/excitable cats and dogs unless they can have a separate and secure room.

### **NEUTERING**

Chinchillas do not need to be neutered unless they are due to be introduced as a mixed sex group - in this scenario, we recommend the males are neutered as it's a less invasive procedure in comparison to the females.

Last updated December 2021

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