



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES
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Care of Chinchillas

Chinchillas are intelligent and playful animals that bond quickly to their owners. With love and veterinary care, expect your chinchilla companion to live 10 or more years!

Housing

Choose a wire cage with solid flooring and platforms large enough for climbing and play. Chinchillas need spacious enclosures, and caging should be tall enough to allow them to jump and climb. Avoid wire wheels, as legs can slip through and cause severe injury. A solid surface exercise wheel is recommended and necessary for safe exercise in the cage. Use absorbant bedding - we do not recommend aromatic cedar shavings as they contain resins that may be irritating to your pet. Eco-Straw or paper based beddings are preferred litter for chinchillas. Never put cage in direct sunlight or in a drafted area. Room temperatures of 60-70 degrees Farenheit are recommended. Temperatures above 85 degrees may be fatal!!!

Daily Feeding

Provide fresh water daily, preferably in a glass sipper water bottle, as it is easier to clean and steralize. Fresh western timothy hay should be provided daily, and can be supplemented with other grass hays for variety. Chinchillas **less than a year old** should also be offered alfalfa hay. Your chinchilla should roughly be eating a pile of hay twice the size of their body daily. Offer limited amounts (**2 tbsp**) of a **high-fiber pellet**.

Pellets

A uniform, fortified, treat free pellet provides essential vitamins and minerals not found in hay. For adult chinchillas, feed 2 tablespoons of an alfalfa based pellet per day. Chinchillas less than a year old should have unlimited pellets. We recommend Oxbow Chinchilla Deluxe or Zupreem.

Treats

Treats should be limited to no more than 1 per day. We recommend safe wood chew sticks (apple, willow, pecan, etc.), whole oats (horse feed), rose hips, and baked treats using timothy hay instead of flour. Fresh leafy vegetables or herbs can be offered, but should be fed rarely and in limited quantities. We do not recommend raisins or seed based treats. A diet containing too many vegetables, fruits, or sugary treats can result in diarrhea, gastrointestinal upset, and obesity.

Health Concerns

Nutrition plays a key role in keeping your pet chinchilla healthy. Fiber, in the form of high quality grass hay, is of the utmost importance in preventing gastrointestinal upset and dental problems, two of the most common health issues plaguing the pet chinchilla. A chinchilla's teeth never stop growing. Hay is essential because it stimulates normal chewing and dental wear patterns, helping to decrease the risk of dental disease. The teeth (incisors AND molars) should be checked at every physical exam.

Due to the density of chinchillas' fur and their naturally oily skin, they should have access to a dust bath as opposed to water. We recommend allowing them to dust bathe several times a week to every other day outside of the cage for a few minutes at a time. Do not use scented dust. We recommend Oxbow's Poof, Blue Cloud, Blue Sparkle, or LM Farms dusts.

Male chinchillas need a monthly hair ring check, as they can get a ring of hair around the base of their penis. They can usually clean it off themselves, but if they can't, the ring can cause a penile prolapse and/or a serious infection. We recommend a check at home at least monthly - *ask us to show you how*.

Reasons for a veterinary visit include:

- Loose, soft, small, infrequent, or lack of stool
- Blood in the urine
- Overgrown front teeth, drooling, difficulty chewing, matted fur around the mouth
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking - not eating or defecating for 18-24 hours is a **medical emergency!**

We strongly recommend annual health examinations and routine blood work on all exotics!

