

Chinchilla

Chinchilla lanigera

Adult Size	One pound, 10 – 14" plus 4" of tail	Life Span	15 Years
Male/Female Differences	Females tend to be larger than males. In males, there is some space between the urethra and the anus. In females, it is very close to the anus.		
Compatibility	Can be housed with others of the same sex; opposite sexes get along, but must be fixed to avoid reproduction. Chinchillas raised together make better cage mates. New chinchillas must be introduced slowly and gradually.		
Origin	Cool and dry Andes of South America.		
Climate	House temperature is preferred. Air conditioning works well with chinchillas as it keeps the air cool and dry.		
Day Cycle	Mostly nocturnal, playing at night and snoozing during the day.		
Temperature	Keep below 80 degrees. Cooler home temperatures suit them well.		
Lighting	Being mostly nocturnal, lighting is not an issue. When they are awake avoid bright lights.		
Humidity	The drier the better. Chinchillas are susceptible to heat stroke at high humidity.		
Habitat/Territory	Holes and crevices in the dry and rocky Andes mountains.		
Substrate/Bedding	Use wood chips or recycled paper products in the tray under the chinchilla cage. Bedding can also be used inside the cage, on top of the wire floor. Cedar and pine should not be		

used as they can cause respiratory and liver problems.

Hiding Place/Den	Offer a wooden box to hide in. It needs to be large enough to allow your chinchilla plenty of room to move around.
Cage Type	Avoid plastic coated wire cages, as chinchillas love to chew and plastic can cause intestinal impaction. Wire cages work best: the wire bottom allows droppings to fall through. Cages need to be large enough to allow the chinchilla to run around. Provide different levels for your chinchilla to play on.
Diet	Pelleted chinchilla food is perfectly suited to the dietary needs of chinchillas. Offer greens sparingly. These desert animals are adapted to getting nutrition out of grasses, and need a hay based diet. Rabbit or guinea pig pellets can be used but only for short periods of time.
Supplements	Chinchillas need little to no supplementation. Offer plenty of timothy hay or alfalfa. Offer greens sparingly. Calcium can be offered to pregnant chinchillas, and vitamin C can help prevent oral problems.
Diet Precautions	Avoid sugars, both refined and natural, such as raisins, carrots, and treat sticks, as they can lead to diarrhea and, eventually, diabetes. Avoid greens as the excess water can cause these desert animals to bloat. Avoid high fat foods like nuts.
Feeding	A chinchilla's stomach is about half the size of their head so try not to overfeed. Give about that size twice a day and throw away the leftovers to prevent spoilage.
Water Source	Water should be provided via a bottle, as it stays cleaner than a water bowl. Chinchillas are big chewers, so protect the water bottle with a metal sleeve, or use a bottle that hangs externally.
Grooming	Dust baths are a must! Offer chinchilla dust in a cat litter box or a special chinchilla dust bowl. Wet chinchillas need to be dried quickly, as their fur is highly absorbent and can grow mold and fungus. Brush your chinchilla to help remove old hair.
Oral and Foot Care	Offer a wide variety of types of wood to trim their teeth. Wooden bird toys, without bells or other metal parts, make great toys. Pumice blocks will also keep their teeth worn down. Avoid mesh exercise wheels where their feet can get caught, and avoid ones with cross bars that could injure them when they exit the wheel.
Proper Handling	Scoop up your chinchilla rather than grab at them. Handle carefully due to fragile bones. If the chinchilla proves to be uncooperative grab them by the base of the tail and then with the other hand secure them against your hand. It takes time and patience for your chinchilla to trust you so don't

	rush things.
Habitat Maintenance	Being arid animals, chinchillas are very clean. Clean out soiled areas or clean trays daily. Clean the cage once a week with soap and water.
Health Concerns	Intestinal blockage due to chewing unsafe materials. Diabetes from improper diet.
