

Chinchillas

Chinchilla lanigera



Approximate life span: 10-15 years
Estimated adult size: 500-800 grams
Difficulty Level: Advanced



Chinchillas, also called long-tailed chinchillas or more informally “chins,” are a rodent species, native to the Andes mountains. They have the densest fur of all land mammals, resulting in ultra-soft fur. Due to their dense coat, they should not get wet or should be dried quickly if it does happen, as it can result in fungal infections. Instead, chinchillas, should be given a dust bath a few times a week in which they will instinctively roll around to maintain their coat.

HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Chinchillas are highly social animals and should not be housed alone. They require cages that are more tall than wide with plenty of room and shelves to climb and jump. Chins should be housed in a well-ventilated cage with no wire flooring as this can damage their feet. Line cages and shelves with soft fleece and thoroughly clean weekly, spot cleaning daily. Provide hide boxes for visual security, as chinchillas are nocturnal and need to sleep during the day. Most will also benefit from a large exercise wheel.

DIETARY NEEDS

Hay: Chinchillas need free access to grass hay at all times to promote dental and GI health. Newborn, juvenile, and pregnant or lactating chinchillas should be provided with unlimited alfalfa hay. This should make up 70% of the chinchilla diet.

Pellets: Chinchillas should be fed a quality timothy-based pellet. Avoid pellets with added grains, seeds, fruits, and nuts as these items are too high in fat and carbs, which can lead to obesity and health issues.

Treats: Treats should be used sparingly, but can include apple sticks, commercial hay-based treats, and goji berries.

Chewing: Because their teeth never stop growing, wood sticks, blocks, and shelves provide a variety of ways to wear their teeth down to prevent dental disease.

RECOMMENDED VETERINARY CARE

- Annual exams
- Common illness: heart disease, GI stasis, dental disease