



## **CHINCHILLA CARE**

Chinchillas are nocturnal rodents originating from South America, where they are commonly found in the mountains of the Andes. There, they were originally bred for their fur, but nowadays in the UK are kept as pets. They can be friendly docile pets and can live between 10-15 years if looked after correctly. Their teeth grow continuously throughout their life, so they must wear them down by eating hay and grass.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

- Chinchillas are very active and destructive animals so should be housed in multi-level wire cages at least 2 x 2 x 1m, to allow natural jumping and climbing behaviour.
- Within the cage, nest boxes, branches and shelves should be provided.
- A dust bath should be offered daily to keep the fur in good condition.
- Temperature – chinchillas will get heat stress and ideally should be kept in a low humidity environment between 10-20°C (50-68F).
- Protection from predators is essential.
- The enclosure should be cleaned out at least once a week to help prevent disease.

### **COMPANIONS**

- Chinchillas are highly social, and are best kept in pairs, single sex groups, or one male with several females.
- Male chinchillas may be castrated if opposite sexes are kept together.

### **WHAT TO FEED**

- Hay or grass is essential to maintain gastrointestinal and dental health, and should make up most of the diet.

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- Fresh vegetables and small amounts of fruit (not fruit high in simple sugar) should be fed daily.
- Commercial pellet diets are also available and can make up a small part of a chinchilla's diet (approximately 10%). As chinchillas can be highly selective feeders, complete pelleted diets are preferable to muesli mixes as they help to ensure that the animal receives a balanced diet.
- Clean water must be given daily either in a water bottle or bowl.

## **VACCINATIONS**

- No routine vaccinations are currently recommended for chinchillas

## **NEUTERING**

- Male chinchillas may be castrated in order to reduce fighting, or prevent reproduction

## **PARASITES**

- No routine parasite prevention is currently recommended for chinchillas

## **SIGNS OF ILL HEALTH**

- As chinchillas are a prey species they will hide disease, so the first time you see any signs you must act quickly.
- Dental disease – chinchillas need a high fibre diet as their constantly growing teeth need to be worn down in order to avoid dental problems. If your chinchilla is losing weight, drooling, eating less or passing less faeces than normal, dental disease should be suspected and a thorough dental examination should be carried out (often under general anaesthetic).
- Fur slip – a patch of fur may be lost if a chinchilla is stressed out by handling or fighting.
- Bleeding or discharges from anywhere should be assessed by your vet.
- Limping, change in grooming behaviour or wounds should be assessed by your vet.
- If you have any concerns contact your vet as soon as possible.