

Brant County SPCA

Chinchillas Chinchillas



GENERAL INFORMATION

Chinchillas make wildly amusing, playful, as well as loveable pets. A well-taken care of chinchilla can remain in your family anywhere from six to ten years or more. The average male chinchilla weighs between 400-500 grams, while the females can reach 600 grams. Chinchillas love to play, so they require lots of attention from their owners. Supervised playtime is the best way for you and your chinchilla to interact and bond. Since they love to chew and are extremely curious, check that electrical cords, toxic plants, or anything breakable is out of reach of your chinchilla.

GROOMING/BATHING

One unique characteristic of the chinchilla is their bathing habit. Unlike most mammals, the chinchilla does not require a bath in water. Instead, they take dust baths. A wet bath will strip the chinchillas fur of its natural oils which protect their skin and help regulate body temperature. A dry bath is done with dust that can be purchased at your local pet shop, or from most chinchilla breeders.

For approximately ten minutes, every day or every other day, place a small dish of the dusting mixture in your pet's cage. Sit back and watch as your chinchilla rolls, flips, and plays in the dust! It is always best to remove the dusting container immediately after a bath to prevent the dust from being soiled with feces, food, or bedding.

FEEDING

The basic chinchilla diet consists of a small amount of chinchilla pellets, along with a good quality grass hay mixture. If chinchilla pellets are difficult to find, they can be substituted with rabbit or guinea pig pellets. Be sure the food stays fresh and clean. Chinchillas can be offered treats of fresh fruits and vegetables kept to a minimum. Most chinchillas love a raisin or an apple slice as a treat! Water should be offered in a bottle placed on the outside of the cage. The water should be changed, and the bottle thoroughly cleaned at least every other day to prevent harmful bacteria growth.

HOUSING

Since chinchillas love to jump, run and play, wire cages are most suitable for pet chinchillas. An adequate size cage for a single chinchilla is 3 feet by 2 feet. Of course, the bigger the cage, the more room they have to run and play, resulting in a happier pet, along with more entertainment for you! The bedding of the cage should be carefully considered. Try to avoid wood shavings that can irritate their delicate noses or complicate their breathing. Newspaper works well too. Location of the cage is a vital decision. Be sure to avoid any drafts, damp rooms, direct sunlight, or heat sources.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Teeth

Overgrown teeth is a common problem among chinchillas. The spurs or points of the teeth can do serious damage to your chinchilla if it goes untreated. Watch for any changes in your chinchillas eating habits, excessive drooling, or even diarrhea. Having your vet perform an oral exam on your chinchilla can help prevent the teeth from overgrowing. However, if this happens to your pet, it is easily fixed with a tooth trim by your veterinarian.

Heat stroke

Heat stroke is another problem seen in chinchillas. During hot and humid weather, use rotating or ceiling fans to cool the room, place bottles of ice in the cage, or turn on the air conditioner if you have one. Try to avoid direct sunlight or long car trips in the heat.

Gastrointestinal

Become familiar with a normal stool for your chinchilla. Being able to recognize changes in your pets feces can help you catch problems before it becomes too advanced. If your chinchilla has diarrhea, feed pellets and hay only (hold back on the treats...). Offer lots of water to replace lost fluids. If the diarrhea continues, or your chinchilla stops eating or drinking, a trip to the vet is a must.