

The McPet Shop

CHINCHILLA

General Information

The natural habitat of the Chinchilla is the Andes in South America where they have learnt to survive in high areas. Most of our pet Chinchillas are related to 11 animals that were captured in the 1920's. They are most active in the early evening and at night and do not like warm temperatures. Chinchillas can be kept singly. Pairs of males or females will not live happily together, but a castrated male will get on well with a female if a non-breeding pair is required.

Housing

Housing needs to be large enough for a chinchilla to run around in and easy to clean. The McPet Shop chinchilla starter kit is the minimum required, however, the wider the better. A ladder and different levels should be provided to allow the chinchilla to explore. A large nesting box is required and used to provide sleeping quarters. A dust bath is essential for 15 to 20 minutes a day to allow the chinchilla to clean itself. The bath must be made from metal so that it cannot be chewed. Fill the bath with chinchilla dust, sieve it daily to remove faeces and replace the dust every two weeks. A dust bath is important as chinchillas do not have waterproof coats and therefore can not be given a water bath. The cage should be placed out of draughts, direct sunlight and radiators to prevent heat stroke. The room in which they are kept must be well ventilated, have a reasonable level of moisture in the air and not become too warm. The base of the cage should be covered with a layer of wood shaving to absorb waste and to prevent health problems. Keeping two chinchillas together prevents boredom and stress as they will entertain and provide comfort for each other. Clean the cage out every day and disinfect the cage, water bottles and food dishes once a week.

Exercise

A large cage will allow exercise when you are not there but your chinchilla will need supervised exercise every day. Care should always be taken because falls may result in broken bones or teeth. Chinchillas are very fragile therefore make sure the cage is not too high (less than 1 metre). Chinchillas love to chew and an old breeze block in addition to wooden chews will provide an excellent sitting block and something for them to keep their teeth healthy.

Handling

A new chinchilla will be nervous due to the change of environment, so after preparing the cage or aviary, leave your pet alone for 24 hours to settle in. Over handling at this stage causes stress which can be fatal. When your pet is used to the new home, you should begin to introduce your hand into the cage talking gently. Chinchillas are naturally inquisitive animals and will eventually learn to trust allowing you to handle them. Never grab a chinchilla as they become easily stressed and may shed their fur or lose their tail in defence. Hold your pet firmly but not too tightly around his neck and support his back end. Holding firmly will make them feel secure.

Feeding

Water is best offered by drinking bottle, replace the water every day and ensure that the bottle is working. Chinchillas require high levels of fibre. Chinchilla pellets or mix should be given fresh every day. Hay must be available at all times, this is essential to ensure daily dietary fibre is sufficient. Poor quality hay causes diarrhoea. Small treats can be offered but be careful as chinchillas are prone to dietary diarrhoea. Only two raisins daily, 1/6 apple or a carrot each week. Avoid nuts and sunflower seeds because oil levels are too high.

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Chinchilla Health

Chinchillas are not often affected by disease, however, their diet, housing and environment can have dramatic effects on their health and the majority of diseases are stress-related. Overgrown teeth and nutritional disease are the biggest health problems. If your Chinchilla loses its appetite, some body weight, has runny eyes or nose, develops diarrhoea or has a poor coat or skin; seek veterinary advice.

Your Health and Hygiene

Chinchillas are clean animals, however, it is important to wash your hands before (so you do not frighten your pet with unusual smells) and after handling your Chinchilla's area (to prevent the spread of infection). Remove soiled bedding in the living area daily and clean the cage/tank and sleeping area thoroughly once a week. Disinfect with a chinchilla friendly product.

Key Chinchilla Facts

Weaning	6 - 8 weeks	Puberty	4 - 8 months
Gestation	111 days	Litter Size	Between 1 and 5
Adult Weight	400 - 500g	Life expectancy	10 years

This Care leaflet is a basic guide only. More information is available from pet care books or the The McPet Shop guide available in the store.

Guarantee

The McPet Shop does not guarantee the age or sex of any animal, bird or fish sold. All livestock is guaranteed for 48 hours from the time of sale. The McPet Shop aims to supply completely healthy pets. If a problem occurs within this period, then please contact the store.

CHECK - Tick the box as you complete your task

Housing

- A large **cage**, the bigger the better, maximum height 1.2 metres.
- A wooden or breeze block to sit on
- **Bedding** for the sleeping box (hay or straw).
- **Bedding** (shavings) for the cage floor.
- A separate **sleeping box** or house.

Exercise

- **Chews.**
- **Dust bath & dust.**

Feeding

- **Food** – Chinchilla pellets & Hay. Ask our associates what we have been feeding.
- **Food bowl, hay net and water bottle.**
- **Disinfectant** for feeding dishes and water bottle.
- **Chews/wooden blocks.**
- A vitamin **supplement.**

Knowledge

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- ◆ Books to improve your pet knowledge.