

Lifespan

With good care the average lifespan is about 15-20 years.

Behaviors

Chinchillas are inquisitive, social animals with incredibly soft fur. Chinchillas can be kept together and should have a companion unless you can devote a large amount of time to your chinchilla. They are most active in the evenings and mornings and sleep during most of the day.



When picking up your chinchilla, try to scoop them up from the bottom supporting their belly and strong back legs. If they feel threatened while being held they can shed large patches of fur in an attempt to escape. This is called “fur slip” and while it does grow back it can leave a large bald patch for a while.

Housing

A single chinchilla should be kept in a solid bottom cage at least 24” wide, 24” deep, and 36” tall with multiple levels. This should be increased if there is more than one kept together. Chinchillas are very active and like to run and jump. They will chew wood and plastic so only ceramic or metal food dishes should be used. Water bowls get very dirty so water bottles attached to the side of the cage should be used. Carefresh (recycled shredded paper) bedding, layers of fleece bedding, or kiln-dried pine pellets are the best options to use at the bottom of the cage.

Cardboard boxes offer great hiding places and chinchillas enjoy destroying them as well. Toilet paper rolls, wooden chews, and other destructible toys (avoid plastic) provide good enrichment and chewing opportunities.

Dust baths are essential to their health and fur quality. Chinchilla dust is specifically available at pet stores and should be used rather than regular sand which is too coarse. This can be available at the bottom of the cage at all times in a large bowl that can’t be tipped over. But since the dust flies all over while chinchillas are dust bathing it can be offered for 30 minutes every 1-2 days to reduce mess if needed.

Chinchillas are sensitive to high temperatures and high humidity so they should not be in an area that gets above 80°F, especially if humid.

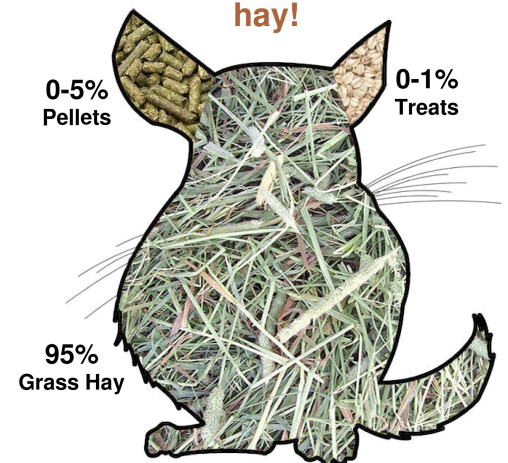
Diet and Nutrition

All of the teeth of chinchillas grow continuously throughout their life. Chewing grass hay wears the teeth down to keep them at an appropriate length. Hay also keeps the digestive tract functioning well and prevents obesity and diarrhea. *Grass hay (timothy, orchard, oat hay, etc) is absolutely necessary to the health of your chinchilla and should be available in unlimited quantity at all times.* Alfalfa hay should only be used in chinchillas less than a year old or if they’re pregnant/nursing due to the high level of calcium which can contribute to bladder stones.

Pellets specifically formulated for chinchillas can be offered at no more than 1 tablespoon per day. Avoid mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, and fruit.

Treats for chinchillas should be very limited. Uncooked oats, dried rose hips, carrots, and raisins can be given. Things like yogurt drops, cheerios, nuts, fruit, and prepackaged treats should not be offered.

Almost all of an adult chinchilla’s diet should be hay!



Signs of Illness

If your chinchilla is not eating or not pooping it needs to be seen by a vet right away. Sneezing and/or discharge from the eyes or nose are also problems that need veterinary attention.