



Chinchilla Care Guide

Diet, Husbandry & General Care Guidelines

Nutritional Needs

Hay:

Timothy Hay should be 75% of an adult chinchilla's diet. *Oxbow Hay* offers high-quality timothy hay. Unlimited hay should be available at all times.

Alfalfa Hay, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay or Botanical Hay can be offered if your chinchilla will not eat timothy hay.

Make sure your hay is green and smells fresh before buying.

Pellets:

Oxbow Essentials Chinchilla Food is a high-quality, high in fiber pellet that should comprise 20% of the diet at 1/8 cup daily. Other brands include: *American Pet Diner Timmy* or *Alffy Chinchilla Pellets*.

Avoid pellets that are mixed with nuts, corn, seeds and fruit.

Fresh Produce:

Vegetables: Parsley, carrots, red and green lettuces, dandelion greens, cilantro, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens and collard greens

Fruits: Apple slices, banana slices, strawberries can be fed in very small amounts.

Sick animals should not be fed fruit or anything high in sugar.

Treats:

Dried apples, alfalfa, raisins, rosehips and figs are acceptable treats. Treats should amount to no more than one teaspoon daily. All natural treats should be the only treats offered. *Avoid commercially produced treats like yogurt drops and seed sticks.*

Housing Recommendations

The home cage of a chinchilla should be a minimum of **nine square feet** for one adult, adding three to four square feet per additional chinchilla. The cage should be comprised of wire or metal bars with a solid floor. The larger and taller the cage, the better. If possible find a cage that is tall with shelves and ladders allowing the chinchilla to climb. *Place the cage in a quiet area where human activity will not disrupt them during the day. The temperature should not reach over 77 °F, be sure to place the cage away from drafts and direct sunlight.*

Cage Accessories

The following should be included in your chinchilla's cage:

- Water bottle:** Glass is better to avoid chewing
- Crock for pellets**
- Wheel:** Choose a wheel that is at least 15 inches in diameter, with a solid running surface and an open side with no cross supports. *Wire wheels are dangerous and can seriously injure feet, legs and tails.*
- Dust Baths:** Regular dust baths are essential for hygiene. Provide a dust bath at least **twice** weekly.
- Nest Box:** Comfortable hiding places are also important



Cage Cleaning

Chinchillas are naturally clean animals that will physically and mentally decline in a dirty cage. A complete change of bedding and thorough cleaning of the entire cage contents should occur **at least twice weekly**. Proper cage maintenance is essential to prevent infection and disease.



Cage Accessories Continued...

- Toys:** Nontoxic, untreated branches and twigs from apple trees can be placed in the cage as toys. Other examples include willow balls and rings that are made for rabbits or a pumice block for chewing.
- Bedding:** Cover the cage floor with one-two inches of Care Fresh or similar paper-based bedding. Aspen bedding is another acceptable choice. A thick towel topped with a fleece blanket is also a great alternative to traditional bedding. **Cedar and pine contain harmful phenols and oils, therefore these products should be avoided.**



Handling Your Chinchilla

The correct way to pick-up and hold a chinchilla is by placing one hand below the body, with the thumb around a front leg and a second hand beneath the hind quarters to support the weight. **Improper handling can cause clumps of hair to fall out.** Never pick-up or pull a chinchilla by the tail; this can cause broken vertebrae.

Vegetables to Avoid

No Nutritional Value: Iceburg lettuce, cucumbers and celery. *These can cause diarrhea/soft stools.*

Gas Producing: Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli.

Common Medical Concerns

Digestive issues, dental issues and obesity are common medical problems of the chinchilla. If your chinchilla exhibits the following symptoms, **please contact your veterinarian for an appointment right away:**

- Changes in the stool (amount and consistency)**
- Blood in the urine**
- Overgrown front teeth or drooling**
- Bald patches on the skin**
- Hair loss and wet/crusty fur**
- Sores on the feet**
- Decrease/increase in eating or drinking**