



Housing

Chinchillas need lots of space and sadly suitable housing options are limited. They require a minimum of 648,200 cubic cm.

To work out the cubic cm of any cage, simply multiply the length, width and height. Cages should have a minimum width of 90cm and a minimum depth of 60cm. Ensure you only choose an all metal cage, chinchillas easily chew through plastic and escape! Cage should be placed away from direct sunlight, radiators and drafts.

Other Important Things



Dust Baths - Chinchillas need daily access to dust baths to keep their coats in good condition.

Company - As social animals chinchillas need company of their own kind. They can be very difficult to introduce as adults and this has to be done very slowly. Same sex litter pairs make the best companions, but you can also neuter males to live with females.



Vet Care - Chinchillas are classed as exotics within the veterinary industry and therefore owners need to carefully select a suitable vet able to treat them. We recommend Origin Vets for West Wales and Origin Vets Clinic for South Wales.



Our Guide to



Chinchillas

What's Awesome About Chinchillas



You can't deny that chinchillas are CUTE! They have amazingly soft fur, it's actually the densest coat of any land animal. Sadly, this almost drove them to extinction in the wild, as they were hunted for their fur. These cute little fur balls are native to South America, but wild populations can now only be found in Chile. They live in groups, called herds, which average in number from around 14-100 individuals. They are incredibly active and agile animals, jumping up to 6ft. Chinchillas can be vocal and 'bark' to show their displeasure.

As pets, chinchillas do bond with their human companions, early socialisation with people is important, but with time and patience it is possible to foster a bond with adults.

Things to Think About



It's very hard not to want chinchillas as pets, but there are a number of very important factors to consider before adding them to the family.

Chinchillas are a very long term commitment with a life-span of between 15-20 years, making them the longest lived domestic rodent.

They are also completely nocturnal, if you've seen these guys in pet shops they've most likely been napping, so don't be fooled by their placid looking natures. When the sun goes down these guys wake up and they are ready to run. They are amazing to watch and are natural parkour experts, but they need plenty of room to ping about. They are also very noisy at night and will keep their humans awake as they leap around.

They are also quite messy animals, flinging bedding and droppings out of their cages and the dust required to keep their fur in good condition gets everywhere. They also moult sending fine fur flying around, so not good for those with allergies.

Diet

Chinchillas have very specific dietary needs and it's vitally important we provide them with suitable foods. Unable to produce insulin, and an inability to process fats, means they require a sugar and fat free diet. Failure to stick to this strict regime will lead to diabetes and hepatic steatosis (fatty liver disease).



A commercial pellet specifically designed for chinchillas should be offered once a day, we recommend Science Selective.



A good quality long stranded hay needs to be provided at all times and should make up the bulk of their diet.



For a bit of variety and a treat you can add dried forage such as plantain, and small amounts of dried flowers.



Willow balls and apple tree sticks are also enjoyed by chinchillas and provide a healthy snack.

Enrichment

Chinchillas love to leap and enjoy housing which provides lots of little ledges. They also love to chew and should be provided with lots of safe wooden accessories to fulfil their desire to gnaw. Some chinchillas enjoy wheels, but it is important to ensure wheels are big enough and it is virtually impossible to find suitable wheels in pet shops. We recommend TickTac Wheels, although expensive they are well worth the investment.

