

Social Needs

Chinchillas are very social animals who need **at least one partner** to be healthy and happy. It is recommended to either keep a **family unit** or a **group of 2-3 chinchillas**.

When you're a beginner it is advisable to get a **good functioning group** of chinchillas that's already been **together for a while**. Young chinchillas (under 2 years) aren't recommended for beginners - because of puberty they tend to fight a lot and groups often split up during that time. Female or mixed-gender groups are **more stable** than male groups but if you get males it's best if they're brothers or father and son. When keeping mixed groups, **every male has to be neutered!**

Chinchillas who don't know each other must **never be left together without specific socialization**. When bringing together unfamiliar animals, the standard procedure described on our website often works well.

Chinchillas communicate through sounds, body language and scents.

Play Time

Chinchillas need a **secured place where they can run around** and get exercise for a couple hours every day. For their enrichment you can decorate the space with baskets, climbing towers and other creative objects. Many chinchillas are happy about an exercise wheel or a flying saucer, too! Fresh branches (best with leaves), willow balls and hay tunnels are also a great way to keep your chinchillas busy in a **natural and healthy way**.



E-Mail: chinchilla-scientia@web.de

Health

Every evening when it's feeding time, the owner should pay attention to the following:

- Are fur, genital areas, eyes, nose, feet etc. free of damp, dirty, bald or bloody spots?
- Is the animal eating normally? Does it take treats from you?
- Do the feces and urine look as usual?
- Is the animal agile and active? Does it want to run around? Does it react as usual for example to the owner?

With sudden or steady weight decrease as well as abnormalities in the above questions, see a **chinchilla-trained** veterinarian.

The most common diseases in chinchillas are dental-, cardiac- and cancer diseases. Furthermore accidents, heat strokes, bites, lung- and uterine infections occur quite often.



Where to get Chinchillas

It is best to take **"second-hand animals"** from owners who have to or want to give them away for various reasons (loss of interest, allergy, relocation etc.) or to adopt chinchillas from **animal welfare** (animal welfare associations, foster homes, nursing stations).

However, you should **never** get chinchillas from **dubious or shady backyard breeders!**

Youtube: Chinchilla Scientia



Information sheet All about Happy Chinchillas



Copyright © 2021 by A. Handermann & M. Slaby

Interesting Facts

The chinchilla is a rodent from the **guinea pig family**, weighing about **500-800g**.

As a pet, the long-tailed chinchilla "Chinchilla lanigera" is kept.

The natural color is **standard gray** (silver agouti with a white belly). But there are many other coat variations as well: Beige, Afro Violet, Sapphire, German Violet, Velvet, Ebony, and the resulting combinations.



In the wild, the small rodents live in **colonies** and spend the warm day sleeping in hideouts. At dusk, after the air has cooled down, they leave their hideouts and go search for food. Grasses, herbs, flowers, shrubs, and fruits, rarely roots, seeds, and now and then insects belong to the natural food spectrum.

Theoretically, the life expectancy is **20 years and more** but chinchillas rarely live to this age, usually only **about 5-15 years**. The reason for that is **frequent reproduction**, with which tooth- and heart illnesses are passed on to new generations. Another reason is that many chinchillas are kept in **wrong conditions**.

At the age of **4 months** chinchillas can become sexually mature. Females can give birth 2-3 times a year to a litter with 1-6 young (mostly 1-3) each. Chinchillas are fully grown at about 2 years.



How to keep Chinchillas

Chinchillas need a large floor space in the enclosure to be able to run and jump species-specific. For 2-3 animals a volume of **3 cubic meters with a minimum width of 2m** is recommended. For larger groups, more space should be planned accordingly. A separate room for the animals would be ideal. Several **wooden seat-boards** for the chinchillas to jump and sit on should be placed in the cage. For enclosures over 1,8m in height, an entire mezzanine level should be included to ensure that the animals are safe.

The following equipment is suitable:

- Objects made of cork (tronchos, tubes, plates)
- Thick climbing branches of non-toxic trees (e.g. fruit trees, beech, birch, oak, willow, hazel)
- Willow bridges, logs, cattle tunnels
- Hay tunnels, grass tunnels, willow tunnels and balls
- Clay objects (wine racks, tubes, vase)
- Shelters, stairs, houses, climbing trees and mazes made of bark and non-toxic wood
- Stones, bricks
- Edible plants in clay pots with untreated soil, e.g. Golliwog (Callisia Repens) tradescantia, garden bamboo or green lilies

A must in every enclosure is a larger, rodent-proof container filled with **special sand (sepiolite or attapulugus)**, which serves for fur care and stress reduction.

Absolutely unsuitable are objects made of plastic as well as haystacks and food balls! There is a high risk of **injury or even death!** For hay you may use **half-closed containers** like flowerpots/coasters instead.

The bedding in the cage and in the toilet bowls should be changed **once a week**. **On a daily basis**, the cage should be swept briefly and cleaned of old food remains and feces. Visible dirt, e.g. urine, should be removed. For wiping through, **water with apple cider vinegar** is ideal.

Nutrition

The main feed is composed of a species-rich **mixture of dried herbs, flowers and leaves** (min. 30 different plants). Individual components as well as ready-made mixtures can be bought cheaply in online stores. In addition, chinchillas should al-



ways have access to **fresh hay and twigs**. They also should get a portion of **fresh food** (please introduce fresh foods slowly) like **fresh herbs, grasses, chicory, apple** etc. on a daily basis.

If you follow these recommendations, **most chinchillas do not need concentrated feed**. Only animals in **exceptional circumstances** such as during pregnancy, lactation, illness, growth or old age may have **additional needs**. In this case you should check their needs **individually** and feed e.g. 1tsp per animal on 2-3 days a week to a **maximum** of 1tsp per animal per day.



Some **popular plants** to give daily are for example: field horsetail, basil, berry leaves (such as mulberry or raspberry), birch, ribwort and plantain, nettle, echinacea leaves, strawberry leaves, daisies, garden bamboo, ginkgo, oat

herb, hazelnut leaves, hibiscus, cactus flowers, cornflowers, dandelion, alfalfa, meadowsweet, corn leaves, mallow, fruit tree leaves such as apple, pear, peach or cherry, peppermint, marigolds, red clover, yarrow, sunflower, jerusalem artichoke leaves, chicory, willow, hawthorn, meadow hogweed, etc.

All **feeding bowls and the water bowl** have to get **cleaned and freshly filled** everyday.