

# 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

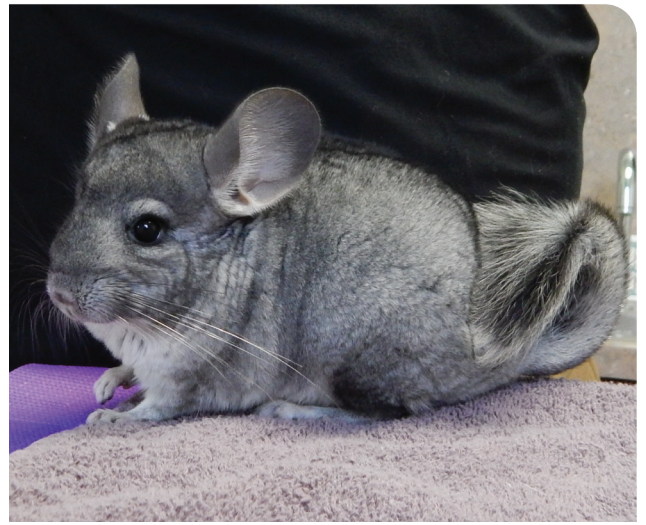
The following should be included in your chinchilla's cage:

- **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**