Chinchilla at a Glance

Fun fact They have the densest fur of any land animal, with up to 60 hairs from one follicle.



Difficulty of care: **Intermediate**

Average lifespan: **9–15 years with good care; many live 15 years or more**

Average adult size: **9–14 inches long, plus a 3–6-inch tail**

Diet: **High-fiber diet**

Minimum habitat size: **24" x 24" x 48"**

Temperature: **55–70 F; never above 80 F**

Enclosure Setup & Maintenance

- Use a multi-level, chew-resistant wire cage with bars no more than 1 inch apart. Provide a solid floor or plastic tray to protect their feet.
- Keep the cage away from direct sunlight, drafts, and heat sources, with humidity below 40–50%. Add hides, shelves, ramps, tunnels, safe chews, and a solid-surface exercise wheel.
- Use 1–2 inches of crumpled paper or quality paper bedding or fleece; do not use wood shavings.
- Rotate toys to encourage mental and physical activity. Provide safe apple wood or white pine chews, but never cedar, cherry, or redwood.

Supply Checklist

- Multi-level wire cage with solid floor
- Paper or fleece bedding
- Hide, shelves, ramps, tunnels, and exercise wheel
- Hay rack, pellets, food bowl, and sipper bottle
- Dust bath container and chinchilla-safe dust
- Grooming brush and nail clippers
- Safe chew toys
- Travel carrier
- Thermometer and hygrometer

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Health

Chinchillas can hide illness well, so watch daily for changes in behavior, appetite, or droppings. Warning signs include drooling, appetite loss, diarrhea or irregular droppings, fur loss, breathing trouble, limping, watery eyes, hunched posture, and closed eyes for long periods.

Panting, red ears, and lethargy can signal heat stroke. Contact an exotic veterinarian with concerns, and only give medication prescribed by a veterinarian.

Offer a dust bath two to three times per week for 15–30 minutes, and trim nails regularly.

Fun fact They can jump up to 6 feet vertically and run up to 15 mph.

Diet

Chinchillas need a high-fiber diet. Provide unlimited Timothy, meadow, or orchard grass hay along with about 2 heaping tablespoons of chinchilla-specific pellets each day. Clean water should always be available.

Treats can be offered once or twice per week but should make up no more than 10% of the diet.

Do not feed seeds, nuts, raisins, chocolate, caffeine, alcohol, high-fat foods, or anything treated with pesticides.



Fun fact Pregnancy lasts 111 days, longer than any other rodent.