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CHINCHILLIA HUSBANDRY

HOUSING

- **Caging:** Wire mesh cages may be used, but a solid floor must be provided to prevent foot pad injuries. Platforms should be provided to allow for exercise and arranged in a way as to prevent contamination of the food and water bowls with feces. Glass aquariums or plastic containers should be avoided due to poor ventilation. Wooden cages should be used with caution as these animals may chew through the enclosure. Paper based bedding is recommended (Carefresh).
- **Bathing:** Dust baths should be provided several times a week to remove oil and dirt from the fur. There are many types of commercial chinchilla dust available. The dust bath should only be left in the cage for 15-20 minutes as excessive use may lead to eye problems.
- **Group Housing:** Chinchillas may fight when housed together, with the females being the more aggressive gender. Unless in a breeding situation, solitary caging is recommended.
- **Temperature:** Chinchillas do not tolerate heat or humidity well. They should be kept in a cool, dry, well lit area with adequate ventilation. The optimal temperature is from 60 to 75 F.

DIET

We recommend a commercially available chinchilla pelleted diet (www.oxbowhay.com instead of a seed mix because they offer complete nutrition. Timothy hay should also be offered as a source of dietary fiber. Alfalfa hay is regarded as a treat and should not be the only fiber source due to its high calcium content. Excessive consumption of alfalfa hay may lead to urinary tract problems. Treats should comprise no more than 10 % of the diet. Dried fruits and fresh vegetables are excellent treats for pet chinchillas. Fresh carrots, green vegetables, and raisins may be given in moderation. Large amounts of sugar in the diet can be detrimental to a chinchilla's health. Fresh water should be available at all times. Water must be changed daily.

VETERINARY CARE

Yearly examinations are recommended for chinchillas to prevent common medical problems. Like rabbits, guinea pigs and other rodents, if chinchillas don't have enough fiber in their diet intestinal problems will likely occur. In addition, overgrown molars can result from an improper diet or a lack of dietary fiber. Newly acquired animals should be checked for internal and external parasites and respiratory infections. Preventative care is very important in these animals because they tend to hide their signs of illness. If you would like to schedule an appointment, please call our office at 240-687-1414.

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