

CARE OF CHINCHILLAS

DIET

Hay: The wild chinchilla lives on a diet of grasses and leaves and has a specialised gut which is adapted for this; the large intestine contains bacteria which break down the grass to make it digestible. The adult chinchilla needs a diet high in fibre with restricted carbohydrate and protein and virtually no fat to stay healthy. Chinchillas must have 24 hour access to loose hay (not cubes). We strongly recommend TIMOTHY hay as this is higher in fiber than Alfalfa. It is very important to check that the hay is of good quality. It should have a fresh sweet smell, not dusty or mouldy.

Pellets: We recommend that an adult chinchilla be given one dessertspoon of pellets a day, this can be split into two meals. Young (under 6 months), pregnant, sick or old (over 6 years) chinchilla should be given free access to pellets.

Fresh vegetables: These are an important source of vitamins. Around 1 bowls should be given everyday. Carrots tops, broccoli, romaine and Chinese lettuce are good. Chinese “Choi” and spinach can be given once a week. Remember to wash thoroughly and make sure they are fresh.

Any dietary changes MUST be slow and gentle. Upsetting the gut causes bacterial imbalances which can have serious consequences (even death). Take up to 1 week to gradually introduce a new vegetable or hay or brand of pellets to your chinchilla. Please note their teeth grow continuously and need to be constantly worn down to prevent overgrowth which leads to pain, oral inflammation/ulceration and loss of appetite. Gut stasis (lack of gut movement) is a serious problem so seek veterinary advice if a chinchilla does not eat or poo for 24 hours or has abnormal faeces (such as diarrhoea or constipation). When buying food ensure that it is fresh (always check the expiry date) and keep the food in airtight containers and away from heat.

WATER

24 hour access is essential. Offer water in a bowl and a dripper bottle so the chinchilla can choose which they prefer

CAGE

The cage should be a minimum of 4ft x 4ft x 4ft. Ensure there are lots of different platforms and branches to climb on. The floor of the cage should be solid and easy to clean, not wire (as this may cause ulceration of the feet). Of course you must keep the cage clean and dry. Ideally the cage should have a covered area where the chinchilla can have privacy and an open area. Chinchillas do not cope well with hot humid weather, temperatures of 10-18C are best, so ensure the cage is situated in a cool, non humid area and there are no draughts. Provide a shallow bowl with chinchilla sand at the bottom of the cage. Remember chinchillas are most active at night so will require the cage to be in a quiet place during the day so they can sleep.

HEALTH

To keep your chinchilla healthy please follow the above advice. Chinchillas are happier when kept with another chinchilla. We advise desexing male chinchillas if they are to be kept with a female or another male. Please also check your chinchilla’s mouth (for a wet chin and teeth grinding which can be signs of oral disease) and feet (for infection and ulceration) regularly. Also keep the anal/genital area clean to prevent faecal matting/ urine scald and infection. Any abnormal hair loss please seek veterinary attention.

FOR FURTHER ADVICE PLEASE CONTACT YOUR VETERINARY SURGEON

龍貓護理

糧食

乾草：在野外生活的龍貓依靠食草葉以維持生命，因此牠們的腸道有特別的構造去適應此類食物。牠們倚賴大腸內的細菌去消化及分解纖維從而獲得營養。成年龍貓需要進食高纖維、低碳水化合物、低蛋白質及基本上無脂肪的食物。飼主需確保龍貓隨時進食到零散乾草（不要草磚）。我們建議餵飼Timothy草，因為它的纖維含量較Alfafa草為高。另外要確保餵飼高質素的乾草，它們應有一股新鮮的草香。若乾草發出塵味或霉味便應棄掉。

乾糧：我們建議給予成年龍貓小量的乾糧；每日可餵飼一甜品匙乾糧（可分兩餐餵飼）。飼主應給予年幼（六個月大或以下）、懷孕、生病或年長（六歲以上）的龍貓足夠乾糧供牠們隨時進食。購買乾糧時務必檢查有效日期，並應將免糧存放於陰涼處及密封容器內。

新鮮蔬菜：新鮮蔬菜是多種維他命的來源，飼主每天可給予一碗。紅蘿蔔、西蘭花、唐生菜、羅馬生菜等都是好選擇。中式菜及菠菜可以一星期給予一次。食用前緊記徹底地清潔蔬菜及確保蔬菜新鮮。

所有食物上的轉換均必須慢慢進行，否則會引致腸道細菌失衡，並可以帶來嚴重後果，最嚴重者可導致死亡。一般來說轉換不同品牌的乾糧、不同種類的蔬菜或乾草需分一星期漸漸進行。另外需注意的是龍貓的牙齒會不斷生長。牠們需要不停咀嚼磨短牙齒，以防止牙齒生過長。牙齒過長的話會導致牙肉發炎或瘡瘍、痛楚及失去食慾。此外腸道瘀積（腸道蠕動不足）乃另一種嚴重問題。如發現龍貓多於廿四小時未有進食或排便或出現不正常大便（如腹瀉或便秘），請即求診。

食水

要確保龍貓廿四小時都有潔淨的食水供應。可同時提供水碗和水樽讓龍貓選擇。

籠子

籠的大小最少為四尺乘四尺乘四尺。籠底要密閉及容易清洗。籠底不應用任何類型的網狀或鐵線，因容易傷及龍貓足部引致瘡瘍。籠子要盡量保持乾爽清潔。如果可以應在籠裏的一邊提供遮蓋使兔子有地方可以躲起來及感覺安全。龍貓難以適應潮濕炎熱的氣候。對龍貓來說最理想的氣溫為十至十八度，故籠子應置於陰涼乾爽的地方。籠底應放置龍貓砂於淺身容器內。另龍貓乃活躍於晚間的動物，故籠子宜放在寧靜環讓其於日間休息。

健康

除了跟隨以上各項建議，你亦應該：

- 1) 定期檢查牙齒及口腔 — 面頰濕潤或牙齒磨蝕可能與口腔問題有關
- 2) 定期檢查腳部 — 檢查有沒有受傷及受細菌感染而膿腫
- 3) 保持肛門及下陰部清潔，防止因大小便積聚而引起的感染
- 3) 定期梳毛，尤其是長毛種的及換毛期間，以防止毛髮打結及患上皮膚病
- 4) 龍貓喜與其他龍貓相處。若飼養多於一頭龍貓，我們建議為雄性的龍貓進行絕育手術

如有任何疑問可請教你的獸醫