

Basic Care & Feeding of Chinchillas

<http://www.sydchilla.com/#!care/c6mg>

Hay

- Buy the greenest freshest dried hay available
- Always have lots of hay available
- Do not feed hay with treats mixed in. Remove any weeds.
- The most economical hay can be found by the bale from a local farmer or feed store. Ask for horse hay. Store hay in a dark, cool, & dry area. A large covered plastic container works great. Look for the greenest bale, avoid hay with any moisture or mud.
- Feed the loose hay from the top of the cage, inside a cardboard tube, ceramic pot, box, or a hay rack outside the cage. Wire hay racks or balls inside the cage are often traps that result in broken or dislocated legs.
- Hay cubes may be used instead of loose hay, chins will eat about 6 weekly

Alfalfa Pellets

- Always have pellets available
- Look for the freshest bag
- Never feed pellets with treats or junk mixed in
- Recommended pellets will be 15% to 17% protein
 - [Agway](#) Rabbit Feed 16%
 - [Blue Seal](#) Bunny 16 /Furry Friends
 - [Brytin](#) professional
 - [Hubbard](#) Life Chinchilla
 - [Mazuri chinchilla](#) call first to ask
 - [Oxbow](#) Essentials Deluxe Chinchilla
 - [Purina Rabbit](#) Chow Show Formula
 - [MannaPro](#) Pro Rabbit
 - [MannaPro](#) Sho Rabbit
 - [Tradition](#) Chinchilla

Treats

- Feed no more than one teaspoon per day
- Never mix treats with pellets
- Only feed treats to adult chinchillas, over a year old.
- Acceptable treats, about one a day include:
 - 3 cheerios
 - 1 dried rose hip
 - 1 mini Shredded Wheat
 - 6" blade of timothy grass
 - Fresh dandelion leaf 2"
 - 6" dried apple stick
 - Weekly treats can include a raisin, dried cranberry, or 1" dried apple sliver
- If your chin has soft droppings, discontinue all treats and pellets until better. Give your chin a mini shredded wheat biscuit daily and only hay until normal.
- Never feed your chinchilla vegetables or fruits, although tiny apple pieces are ok.

Water

- Always have fresh clean water available
- Glass bottles are recommended to avoid chew damage
- Clean bottle with hot soapy water each time it is refilled
- If you have a well, consider using bottled water

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Supplies for your cage

Bedding

- Fill your pan about 2" deep
- Change all bedding weekly
- Recommended bedding:
 - Pine wood shavings - bales at farm supply stores < \$7.
 - Wood chips – Tractor Supply, <\$6.
 - Aspen shavings – pet supply stores
- Your chinchilla will most likely choose one spot for pee, but will poo everywhere. Many chins will use a shallow metal or glass dish in their favorite corner, allowing for spot cleaning of the cage. Plastic rabbit litter pans should not be used, they will be chewed.
- Fleece and a litter pan are a popular alternative to bedding. Poo can be vacuumed or shaken off and the litter pan can be changed. You will want two fleece liners, one to use and one to wash. Fleece is soft for a chin's feet and isn't usually chewed like other fabrics.

Chew Items:

- Wood items
 - Dried pine is the most economical
 - No varnish, polyurethane, paint, oil, or pressure treated wood
 - NO CEDAR or FRESH EVERGREENS!
- Chew blocks/ Pumice
 - Great for their teeth, chins love them
 - Can be purchased at most pet stores
 - Attach them to a dangling toy to keep clean and not lost in bedding
 - Pedicure pumice blocks with no added ingredients
- Cardboard
 - Food grade boxes, or clean cardboard, with none of these:
 - Oil, grease, food, or wax
 - Dirt, soil, mold, moisture
 - plastic or foil coatings
 - Glue, tape, staples
 - Paper towel tubes, oatmeal, cornmeal, or square tissue boxes stuffed with hay are favorites!
- Baskets
 - Clean and unpainted/unfinished
 - Remove all staples, metal fasteners, plastic, bows, glue, or ribbon
- Avoid these:
 - Plastic igloo houses
 - Plastic "tree trunk" huts
 - Edible houses, logs, tubes etc
- Wood houses
 - Multi use: chew items, shelf, and shelter
 - Look for houses with no nails or staples
 - Thicker wood will last longer
- Wood shelves
 - Double as shelf and chew item
 - may be made from kiln dried pine or spruce
 - No paint, stain, polyurethane, pressure treated, chip board, plywood, luan, fresh evergreen branches, molded wood composite products, nails, or staples

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Dusting:

- Chinchillas need to have a dust bath a minimum of twice weekly.
- They only need dust and never any water to keep clean.
- Bathing dust is made from pumice. Do not use kitty litter, sand, corn meal, flour, etc.
- Good brands include Blue Cloud, Blue Sparkle, and Blue Tails
- Add a sprinkle of Desenex or Tinactin powder to your dust to help prevent fungus
- Offer your chin dusting outside the cage to encourage outside play time
- Dust containers:
 - Remove from cage after dusting, sitting in dust will dry their feet and contribute to respiratory problems.
 - High sides or enclosed containers are best for controlling dust
 - Plastic Dust Houses:
 - Don't leave in cage unsupervised, chins will chew it
 - Can hang inside cage
 - Stable and safe
 - Glass 1 gallon jars
 - Clear view of chinchilla dusting
 - Dishwasher safe
 - Chew proof
 - Cat litter pans, dish pans
 - Ventilated plastic storage boxes
 - Kitchen pots/pans/bowls
- If your chin has yellow stain, you can try to clean it by rubbing with corn starch.
- Corn starch or talc baby powder can be added to the dust for a whiter coat.
- If your chinchilla is very dirty offer it dusting daily.

Cleaning the cage

- Clean the cage once weekly and replace all bedding
- Urine stains in pans and on wire can be most easily removed by soaking with vinegar and washed away with minimal scrubbing.
- Pans and shelves should be sanitized with bleach solution periodically and rinsed well
- Fleece liners can be shaken out, replaced and washed weekly.
- Remove any fabric if chins chew it.
- Food dishes should be emptied of all fines often, and washed weekly.
- Water bottles and their tubes should be washed with hot soapy water

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