

Problem Chinchilla

Exploring chinchilla behavior issues.

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Chinchillas are social animals that enjoy play.

Chinchillas are fun, lovable critters that enjoy playing and socializing. Give your chinchilla a comfortable, safe environment to keep it happy. Chinchillas like to have a routine, so maintaining a set schedule everyday will help add normalcy to your chin's life.

Play Behavior

Chinchillas love to play. They will run, chase and play with toys. They might stand on their hind legs or roll a ball around the cage. Chinchillas love people, and they enjoy your presence every day. Some even like to be petted, but most would rather perch on your shoulder to groom.

"Chinchillas lovingly groom each other in the facial areas, ears and [they] smell the breath of the one they are befriending," said Pamela Oldham, chin breeder at Chin Colors Ranch in Sacramento, Calif., "It's their way of getting to know the other." If your chinchilla acts this way toward you, it is a sign that the chinchilla trusts you and wants to befriend you.

Defensive Behavior

Chinchillas are prey animals, so they are always on the lookout for predators. Oldham said, "If they get scared from an unusual sound or movement, their first instinct is to run." If you've bonded with your chinchilla, it will cling to you like a child as though you are protecting it, or it will run to a place in its cage where it feels safe.

If your chinchilla is scared, evaluate the situation, and figure out what stimulus is making your chinchilla scared. Once you know why your chin is scared, remove the threat, and your chinchilla will return to its normal, happy self.

Abnormal Behavior

Your chinchilla might become too aggressive and start biting or barbering (pulling out hair) on other chinchillas. Dr. Beth Brettweiser from All Wild Things Exotic Animal Hospital in Indianapolis, Ind. said, "If this occurs, make a loud sound and your chinchilla will freeze. Chinchillas have sensitive hearing, so loud sounds will divert their attention towards the noise."

Monitor your chinchilla's stool. Look for changes in size and shape. If they are fewer in number, wet or tagged together with other stools, it could be a sign of illness. The most alarming abnormal behavior is not eating. If your chinchilla stops eating, contact your veterinarian immediately.