

Chinchilla Water World

Tips for maintaining healthy water for your chinchilla.

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Chinchillas need water. Yes, it's true. Unlike wild chinchillas that get water from plants, pet chinchillas eat pellets and hay, which contain only small amounts of water. Constantly supplying your chinchilla with enough water sounds simple, but there are things to consider.

Chinchillas need water to help with digestion. They eat fiber, and without a lot of water, chinchillas can suffer bowel obstructions, anorexia or a buildup of toxins from bacteria.

A chinchilla's water must be fresh and clean. Change your chinchilla's water daily. Avoid distilled water, or bottled water with a high sodium content. Sodium will dehydrate your chinchilla. Water softeners also contain high levels of sodium.

Chinchillas need iron and calcium found in natural water. Check to make sure your city or well water has been tested. If it is safe to drink, give your chinchilla cold water from the tap. Vitamin waters are also good, but check the label and the brand. They could contain sodium.

Clean your chinchilla's water bottles daily. Old water or dirty bottles lead to algae buildup. The water will have a foul taste and contain harmful bacteria. Change the water and clean the water bottle every day. Beth Brettweiser, DVM, of All Wild Things Exotic Animal Clinic in Indianapolis, said to wash water bottles with soap and water, and soak in bleach water for one minute to kill any Salmonella bacteria.

"I recommend getting two water bottles: you can wash the used bottle while you put the clean one in the cage," Brettweiser said.

The sipper tube needs to be cleaned daily, too. It is common for sipper tubes to get clogged with bedding material and food. To clean the tube, use soap, water and a good brush. Check your chinchilla's sipper tube several times a day. If the tube gets clogged, your chinchilla will suffer from dehydration.

If your chinchilla is dehydrated it will become sick and stop eating. Call your veterinarian immediately if you think your chinchilla is dehydrated. Depending on the level of dehydration, intravenous fluids might need to be administered.

Depending on your pet's diet, it should drink 30 to 40 ccs of water a day. A medium-sized water bottle holds enough water for one day. If your chinchilla drinks more than that, call your veterinarian.