

Chinchilla Fur Facts

Things to know about caring for your chinchilla's coat.

By Marty Hull, D.D.S. & Amanda Martin

Chinchillas are instinctively clean and practically odorless if dust-bathed regularly (two to three times per week). The dust bath removed excess dirt and oil buildup from their coats. Trolling in the dust is relaxing and chinchillas often nap afterward. Dust-bath houses are available or rectangular glass or metal baking dishes may be used.

All chinchillas shed year-round, with increased fur loss during spring and summers. If your chin ingests excess fur while self-grooming, intestinal blockages may result. Some chins enjoy a gentle combing and will fall asleep on your lap.

Shedding hair tends to drop off chinchillas with thinner coats, so they only require infrequent combing. Chinchillas with thicker, cottony coats need regular grooming because shed hair tends to accumulate and form mats in the coat. Matted fur prevents effective dust bathing, so excess body oil and dirt stays in the coat. If oil and dirt build up in the coat, the fur clumps and separates which causes the chinchillas to lose more body heat and makes it more vulnerable to illness. An unclean coat also makes a chinchilla prone to skin disease and irritation.

As chinchillas jump around their cage, hay, dust bath materials, droppings and litter can escape through the bars despite the best guard strips. Depending on your chinchilla's habits, occasionally some urine can leak onto the floor. Should your chinchilla have diarrhea, its cage can become very messy until the episode passes. If this occurs, scrape off and clean all the affected areas. You must frequently vacuum, sweep and/or dust around the cage area.