

You Got A Chinchilla?

Your guide to chinchilla handling.

By Jessica Cordia

Your pet chinchilla's bones are delicate and prone to breaking, so knowing how to handle your pet is crucial to its wellbeing. One rambunctious chinchilla plus one inexperienced handler could equal several broken bones. Don't worry, chinchilla handling is far from rocket science, and with some experience, chinchilla handling becomes a breeze.

Your pet chinchilla is a flight animal. If it feels uncomfortable or vulnerable in a situation, its first instinct is to flee. When handling, support your chinchilla so it feels safe and secure. Bill Guerra, DVM from The Animal Doctor in Broomfield, Colo. said that the best way to handle your chinchilla is to grab the base of the tail and put your other hand under its chest. Only grab the base of the tail because grabbing the end or middle makes the tail come off. This is a defense mechanism chinchillas use to evade predators in the wild. Unfortunately, once you pull off the tail, it never grows back.

Holding the base of the tail with one hand and supporting your chinchilla's body with the other makes your pet feel secure. In the case that your chinchilla becomes frightened and wants to flee, it won't be able to because you have a secure hold on its tail.

Fur slip occurs frequently with improper handling. Avoid fur slip by never grabbing at your chinchilla's hair. Like their tails, once you grab on to the hair, it will come out in your hands. Being aware of fur slip will help prevent it from happening.

Handle your chinchilla on the floor or close to a surface it can safely land on if it chooses to escape. Dropping your chinchilla from a dangerous distance could be fatal. Children should always handle pet chinchillas on the floor, and they should be at an age where they are aware of being a responsible pet handler.

The more practice you have handling your chinchilla will make the experience more enjoyable for you and your pet. Remember to start low to the ground, and practice makes perfect.