

A Chinchilla Makes Strange Noises

Certain stimuli can cause a chinchilla to react vocally.

By Marty Hull

Posted: December 13, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Q: My chinchilla makes noise during the night. It's usually right when I'm drifting off to sleep. She sounds like a squeaky toy. I have no idea what she's trying to communicate, and it concerns me. I don't know if she is scared, unhappy or something else entirely. Do you know why she makes these noises and what I can do to make it better?

A: If the sound is similar to a bark, we call it a warning. Chinchillas often make this sound to call out to others to be on alert. It can be triggered by a sudden change (turning off the lights), an unfamiliar noise in the distance (chinchillas can hear much more than the human ear can detect), a sudden movement in the household, an unfamiliar person entering a room or speaking or even a headlight's ray passing across the window. Many times, when a chinchilla is in a new environment, it barks often because there are so many new sights, sounds and smells. The chinchilla is understandably frightened and is vocalizing this through the barks. But after the chinchilla becomes accustomed to its new home, the barks become more a way of alerting you that something is different and possibly strange. It wants you to be aware of this.

Another noise a chinchilla sometimes makes is a soft whimper — usually several in succession. A chinchilla makes this sound to see if other chinchillas might be in the vicinity to answer. It is a way of checking in. Mother chins make this sound frequently when calling to their kits, just as the kits make these sounds when calling to their mother from various places in the cage.

[See All Chinchilla Expert Q&A>>](#)