

How Is The Chinchilla As A Pet?

Is a chinchilla a good pet choice for a young child?

By Marty Hull

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Q: I'm looking to get a pet for my daughter. She is 9 years old. She is afraid of dogs and her father is allergic to cats. She likes geckos, but doesn't like feeding them crickets. Gerbils and fish I do not feel have a long enough life span. I was interested in the chinchilla as a pet. Can you tell me if the chinchilla would be a good pet for a girl who has a fear of most other pets? I have read it is a social animal, but it does not like to be held.

A: Chinchillas are very social, but do not typically enjoy being held for long periods. If they are out of their cages, most prefer to run around and explore rather than sit quietly in someone's lap.

As chinchillas become familiar with their new environments, they develop new routines. They learn feeding and play times and often wait at their door in anticipation of your arrival. Many chinchillas enjoy interaction with their human caregivers and perform all kinds of antics to get your attention. They can be very entertaining and fun to watch. Many chinchillas enjoy gentle scratches under the chin, between the front forepaws and along the back and neck.

Chinchillas tend to make nice pets for older children who are at ease handling animals. These pets are perceptive and respond negatively to loud voices and being chased around their cages. They also have excellent memories. They remember who feeds and takes care of them and won't forget if someone chases them.

Occasionally a chinchilla may nip or bite as a warning if it is frightened or cornered. Chinchillas can move very quickly. They are very fragile; their bones break easily if dropped or held incorrectly.

A child who might be timid when interacting with animals may drop the chinchilla or squeeze the animal too tightly. This can cause severe injury or may be fatal. A chinchilla may not be the ideal choice of pet in this instance.

Another pet to consider is a small dwarf bunny. They can live up to seven years or even longer. They are slightly bigger than a chinchilla and do not move as quickly. Many rabbits will sit quietly in someone's lap for long periods. You can also put a harness and leash on a rabbit and take it for walks in the yard.

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