

## Housing Chinchilla Siblings Together

**An owner wonders if it's safe to house chinchillas with the same father together.**

*By Martin Hull*

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**Q:** I was given two male chinchillas, a father and son. After the son was about 1 year old he began attacking the father, so I put them in separate cages. I then was given a female chinchilla that I put in with the father. Easter morning we awoke to a baby chinchilla. I planned to give away the baby, but my children have fallen in love with the baby and want to keep it. Can I put the baby in with the son? The two chinchillas would have the same dad but different mothers. I don't want to have inbred babies.

**A:** You did not mention the sex of the chinchilla kit. If the kit is a female, she should not be put in with a male until she reaches full maturity. A female chinchilla can become pregnant as young as 5 months old. If allowed to breed this early, health problems due to the mother's incomplete development may result. Problems can include premature birth, still birth, poor bone structure (not enough calcium), incomplete digestive tract or respiratory system development or the eventual development of non-hereditary teeth disorders (malocclusion) in either the female and/or her offspring. The risk of health problems may be further compounded if a male and female with the same parent are bred. We recommend holding females out of breeding until they are at least 1 year old and only breeding pairs that are not closely related. The result is stronger, healthier chinchillas.

If your chinchilla kit is a male, I would not risk putting him in with the more aggressive, younger adult male. There is a slight possibility that the new kit may get along with its older father but there are no guarantees. The long-term success rate for two males living together is very low. Pairing males from the same litter may be successful. Pairing males that both have submissive personality types may be successful. But if there is a female in the area, the female hormones may cause aggressive behavior in any male. Once males fight, they should be separated immediately and never put together again as the next fight could be fatal. When pairing any chinchillas, close supervision for the first 24 hours is critical.

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