

## Chinchilla Sheds A Lot

### **What would cause a chinchilla to shed excessively?**

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**Q:** I have chinchilla that is turning 13 months old this month. She is shedding really badly and occasionally some tail fur. What does this mean?

**A:** There are many possible causes of the problem you describe in your chinchilla. To start to determine what the problem is, the first question to ask is: When the hair comes out, is it replaced with normal hair or are there bare patches of skin? If there are bare patches of skin and the hair is not being replaced, then we worry about skin infections. Both fungal and bacterial infections can do this. These types of infections are easily diagnosed by your veterinarian.

Another reason for hair to seemingly fall out and not be replaced is "barbering." Barbering is either "self-barbering" or, if another animal is in the enclosure, this can be barbering by the cage companion. Barbering is also easy to diagnose because the hair shows evidence of being "chewed" and the shafts are shorter than normal.

If the haircoat is being replaced as quickly as it is being shed, then this could be an environmental problem (i.e., temperature fluctuations) or a metabolic problem (i.e., thyroid disease).

The best way to start deciding which of these many causes could be the problem in your chinchilla is to visit your veterinarian and let your doctor do an examination and a few tests to determine the best way to proceed.

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