

Your Chinchilla's Fitness Plan

Provide your chinchilla with opportunities to exercise to keep it fit and healthy.

By Marty Hull

Chinchillas are native to the mountains of South America. These small, furry animals live in crevices and dens among the rocks. They can move very quickly, jump to different rock levels and expertly bank off rock surfaces. It's a lifestyle that includes a lot of exercise and an environment that's difficult to duplicate in a home setting, but you can encourage exercise in the habitat you provide your pet.

The Proper Setting

A large cage is a good start for your chinchilla's fitness plan. Adequate cage sizes for a chinchilla start at 24 inches high by 24 inches wide by 24 inches deep as a minimum, and get bigger from there. Any chinchilla cage must provide adequate room for an exercise wheel, some perches or shelves and a house — plus leave enough room for the chinchilla to move about freely.

Tall cages (30 to 48 inches high) often have multiple stories with ramps connecting floors. All wire surfaces of ramps, floors, ledges and upper stories should have a wire mesh size no larger than 12 by 12 inch to prevent a chinchilla's foot from getting trapped in an opening. Chinchillas are most active at night, so a trapped chinchilla might not be discovered until the next morning. The result can be severe injury to the foot resulting in amputation or even death.

If you have a multi-story cage, eliminate any open balconies or straight drops from a top story to the bottom of the cage. Even though chinchillas are agile, they can fall. A fall can break ribs, break a leg, cause internal injuries or cause death. Add extra shelving or an opened hammock affixed across an unprotected space to prevent injury from a fall.

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