North Star Chinchilla’s

Care Guide

**Bedding:**

Bedding for chinchillas should be aspen or pine. Some pet owners opt to use fleece and a small litter box of aspen/pine. Fleece should be changed every other day at minimum as it’s not moisture wicking and if they are peeing on it, it’s a major source of bacteria. We do not recommend tile as a good option.

**Unsafe Bedding includes:**

Do not EVER use carefresh or any other paper bedding. Paper when eaten can cause impaction.

The carefresh bedding even states this. Do not use Cedar wood shavings, cedar is toxic to chinchillas.

**Use of either of these will void your health guarantee.**

**Food:**

Chinchillas need a high quality pellet and hay. All chinchillas from NSC are sent home with a bag of our feed to transition to your own. Pellets should be plain without any other items in the pellets. Chinchillas are an exotic animal and their diet is important to maintaining a healthy long living animal. Owning one means committing to be able to provide a healthy food for them. Sadly there are many unsafe feeds within popular pet stores that need to be avoided. Oxbow Essentials Chinchilla (red bag only!), Mazuri Chinchilla, and Selective Science are the most commonly used safe feeds in the US. They can be found at PetSmart, Chewy, Walmart and some other small pet store retailers. Manna Pro Small World Chinchilla is also safe and can be found at Walmart or Chewy. I also sell/ship my feed if you prefer to continue using it.

**Unsafe feeds include:**

Higgins Sunburst, Kaytee Chinchilla of any variety, Oxbow Garden Select, Tropical Carnival, The Power of 5, All Living Things Market Medley, Vitakraft Vitasmart, Tiny Farm Friends Charlie Chinchilla, and any feed for other small animal species such as bunnies, hamsters, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs etc. **Use of these feeds will void the health guarantee.**

**Treats:**

Chinchillas under 6 months old should not have any treats. You can give them apple sticks, but no treats! They cannot regulate their blood sugar well enough yet. **ALL pet store treats should be avoided.** Sadly once again pet stores advertise all sorts of unsafe treats for chinchillas they contain nuts, seeds, fruits and veggies and high sugar content. These are very dangerous.

**Use of pet store treats or unsafe items listed above for chinchillas over 6 months will void any health guarantee. Use of ANY treat for chinchillas under 6 months voids the health guarantee also.**

**SAFE TREATS LIST:**

Plain Cheerio Rosehips (dried- crush, whole)

Plain shredded wheat Calendula (dried)

Old Fashion Oats (pinch) Hibiscus Flowers (dried)

Hawthorne Berries (dried) Globe Flowers (dried)

Rosebuds (dried) Bee Pollen

Rose petals (dried) Raspberry leaf (dried)

Treats should be given 2-3x a week after 6 months of age. Berries/Cheerios/wheats should be a single treat and crushed items can be fed as a pinch. Chinchillas do not need treats everyday. Only in moderation.

**Playtime:**

Playtime is not a necessity. Chinchillas are naturally den dwellers. However, if playtime is something you wish to do, you must wait until 6 month and limit to 20-30 minutes. We recommend getting a metal playpen of some sort to keep chins contained and so they cannot access anything that could harm them. They should never be left alone or unsupervised to play. NEVER use a plastic running ball for chinchilla. These are called death balls. They are too hot and will cause your animal to overheat.

**Playtime before 6 months and use of running balls will void any health guarantee.**

**Cage & Accessories:**

Cages must be metal based not wood or plastic. Chinchillas CAN and WILL chew out of plastic. I have pictures and videos to prove it! Plastic pans in the popular Ferret/Critter Nation cages can be either covered in fleece or replaced with metal pans. I highly recommend these cages. Wire spacing must be less than 1”. There are a couple other solid metal cage options on the market by Prevue cages. Chinchillas cannot have any plastic accessories. It will impact their intestines. Plastic dust houses are acceptable but you need to watch them. They cannot be left in the cage with the chinchilla. **Wheels must be 15” or bigger and solid metal.** These need to be custom ordered online and not from a pet store. There are NO safe wheels sold at pet store. Chinchillas must be 6 months to have a wheel. They need a variety of surface textures in their cage. Wood ledges, lava ledges, rounded surfaces, etc to provide proper callouses on their feet. Too much fleece will soften feet. Ledges should be spaced so that there is never more than 18” between them. It’s a myth that chinchillas need tall cages to climb.

**Use of wheels under 6 months and plastic bottom cages will void any health guarantee.**

**Bonding/Introducing your new chin:**

Your new chinchilla needs to undergo a 30 day quarantine before you introduce him/her to any chinchillas you already have or buy. All new animals should always have a 30 day quarantine to be sure they aren’t bringing in any illness. Stress of a new home can sometimes trigger things. After a proper quarantine, we recommend the smoosh method for bonding. You can read about that on our website! **Introducing your new North Star Chinchilla to another chinchilla you have, or buy after ours, before a proper 30 day quarantine will void the guarantee.**

**Temperature control:**

Chinchillas need to be kept under 72 degrees at all times. This is very important. They cannot sweat and cool themselves off. Heatstrokes kill many chinchillas every year. Please do not get a chinchilla if you cannot abide by these guidelines. This is another reason they cannot have lots of playtime outside the cage or be in running balls.

**Travel:**

You should always travel with your chinchilla in a carrier. Never holding him in your hands, this will easily overheat them. Metal carriers are preferred for long term but a cat carrier is ok for too. Petco sells a small carrier called a “You & Me carrier- Large” for about $20 and it’s the perfect size for smooshing for bonding too! Double use. . **Not using a carrier to bring your chin home in, or any other time, will void the health guarantee.**

Final Notes!

**Please pay attention to the bolded sections that highlight what items are unsafe and will void your health guarantee. The reason for this being, that the danger of using these items is so high it could kill your chinchilla. We are making every effort to provide you with proper care guidelines. It’s the responsibility of the owner to be sure they have good research for care. North Star will not replace chinchillas found to have been killed by negligence or by disregard to our care guide. Chinchillas are a long term, specialized animal and require a committed owner.**

**Exotic pet care:**

Owning chinchillas requires special care which we have outlined above. It’s unfortunate there are so many unsafe chinchilla items marketed for them in pet stores. We have provided this care guide to give you everything you need to care for your new pet. We always offer new owners endless breeder support for their questions. You can contact us anytime you need help with your chinchilla, or any chinchillas not from us too! You can find more information on safe retailers on our website or in the groups provided below. Many breeders make and sell safe items, a few rescues, and a few small pet businesses! Prepare to shop online for most of your chinchilla goodies!

**For more online resources please check out these Facebook groups! You can get help with questions from other breeders, and other owners! \*Please remember many online resources are full of outdated information. I am involved in all of the below groups and stand behind their care guidelines as they are standard for all breeders.\***

**Chinchilla Owners & Lovers**

**Chinchilla Lovers**

**Chinchillas 101**

**Ask A Breeder - Chinchillas**

**Chinchilla Breeders and Owners of the Mid-west and Beyond**