

## **Guide-lines for the management of Chinchillas in licensed Animal Trading premises**

Traders and handlers of Chinchillas should be familiar with and be sympathetic to the requirements of these animals. The principles of these guide-lines are based primarily on the unique attributes of Chinchillas.

### 1. Attributes and characteristics of chinchilla

Chinchillas require a simple but specific diet and minimal attention but need quiet, low-stress surroundings.

They should be kept in as much solitude as possible, and should be approached and handled in a quiet and slow, but deliberate manner.

They are nocturnal by nature: active at night and generally inactive in the day-time, and management should reflect this fact.

They can be inquisitive and friendly, but are also timid, nervous and shy creatures which can be easily stressed.

They may bite if overly frightened, and can release clumps of fur when stressed or frightened – a response adapted to thwart predators in the wild. They are agile and can leap relatively long distances. Chinchillas in licensed premises should not be allowed to roam outside of their cages.

### 2. Housing

Isolation from outside disturbance.

All Chinchillas should be insulated from outside disturbance. Particular attention should be paid to noise, light, activity and vibration, all of which may stress the animals.

A small percentage of Chinchillas on public display in licensed premises are likely to be adversely affected by the stress of handling and the movement of people within the shop. For this reason, isolation/ recuperation cages should be provided for display animals which develop symptoms of stress. These cages should be in a restricted-access and secluded area of the premises. This facility should be adjacent to, but separate from the display cage facilities. One cage for every five animal cages on display should be provided as an isolation cage.

Hiding place (retreats) should be provided for each animal, and should be of a suitable design to allow the animal to hide itself completely, and place itself out of the line of sight of any perceived threats to it.

Traders importing regular shipments or large numbers of Chinchillas are likely to need separate licensed premises for holding Chinchilla stock in a restricted-access and secluded area, as well as having licensed display premises with public access.

Chinchillas should not be housed together with dogs, cats, snakes, ferrets or near any other animal or activity which may act as a perceived threat to them.

It is recommended that shop windows should be separate from cage/ display windows to minimize disturbance to the animals.

Lighting should be kept to a minimum at all times.

### **Provision of appropriate ventilation**

Chinchillas should be provided with a well ventilated environment.

They require fresh air and some light, with clean and dry cages.

They should be housed to avoid direct draft and both temperature and humidity should be moderate. They should not be kept in humid conditions. Temperature variation can be tolerated provided ventilation is good and consistent and humidity is not high. In Hong Kong temperatures should not exceed 27°C, and humidity should be kept as low as possible.

### **Caging**

Chinchillas can gnaw through wood, plastic etc – so any materials used in the construction of housing should offer no protruding surfaces which the animals could chew and damage.

A raised platform should be provided for each animal to rest on. This could be roof of the retreat, or a separate platform, but should be of sufficient dimensions to allow each animal to stand comfortably on all four legs.

A sleeping platform should be provided. This could be the raised platform, or a mat on the cage floor within the retreat. No mat is required if the floor is a smooth one.

Floors may be mesh or smooth surface. Smooth floors are preferred. If shavings or litter are used, these should be of a non-toxic nature.

Sand holds moisture and is not recommended for bedding. Hay and straw must be changed frequently due to mould and fungal potential and are also not recommended.

Mesh size should be small enough to safely confine the animals.

### **Dust baths**

Chinchillas should be provided with dust bath facilities. A dry fine ground dust such as “fullers earth” should be provided regularly, and at least every second or third day. The dust must be kept clean and dry at all times. It is recommended that a permanent bath with a close-able top on the inside is placed so that it may be accessed by the handler without opening the cage. This allows the management of dust bath activities without overly disturbing the animals.

### **Stock management**

Young Chinchillas should not be weaned before 8 weeks of age, and not separated from their mother before 12 weeks. Pairs or groups of females or pairs or groups of males should not be housed together, since pairs of the same sex are generally not compatible. Each adult should have its own cage.

### Cage dimensions

NB: Only the metric value (in bold) should be referred to, as there is a slight variation between the metric and empirical figures

No. of animals	Lengh * Width (suggested)		Area (required)		height	
	Inches	cm	Sq inch	Sq cm	inches	cm
1	14*16	<b>34*42</b>	224	<b>1360</b>	16	<b>40</b> #
2	16*24	<b>42*60</b>	384	<b>2520</b>	16	<b>40</b>
3 +	20*27	<b>52*70</b>	540	<b>3640</b>	20	<b>50</b>
4 +	24*32	<b>60*80</b>	768	<b>4800</b>	20	<b>50</b>
More than 4 (other factors may be taken into account)						

# A height of 30cm will be tolerated if the facility is a stock-holding environment in isolation and with access by essential staff only.

+ Groups of 3 or more are generally not acceptable unless the animals can cohabit comfortably.

### 3. Feeding and watering

Licensees will need to hold and provide a suitable diet for the animals. Chinchillas must at least be provided with recognized pellet food and hay (baled or loose).

Chinchillas require something to gnaw on at all times. This should be of a non-toxic nature.

Food containers for pellets or grain should be raised off the floor and securely fastened at all times.

Automatic drinking containers should be provided for each animal, and provision will need to be made to keep these containers clean at all times. Water must be provided at all times and should be clean and free from contamination, including that of litter, faeces urine and algae.

Containers should possess a non-chew dripper tube (not plastic) and if the water bottle is plastic, it must be out of reach to prevent chewing.

End.