

BREEDING CHINCHILLAS

Chinchillas reach sexual maturity at about eight months of age. The estrous (heat) cycle ranges from 30 to 50 days, and if conception doesn't take place, the next estrous occurs about 40 days later. An open vulva, often with visible mucus, is an external indication of estrus. This means that the chinchilla is receptive to the male and if breeding takes place she may become pregnant. You might notice that the area around the vulva and anus changes from a dull flesh color to a deep red.

Chinchillas are seasonally polyestrous, meaning they have several heat seasons in a row during certain times of the year. They may have up to two litters between November and May. Males may remain with the female during parturition and rearing of the young, if she tolerates his presence. Discharge of a copulatory plug, a solid mass of coagulated ejaculate that falls out of the vagina several hours after mating, is a sign that mating has occurred.

Gestation (pregnancy) averages 105 to 118 days, and there are usually two young in each litter (with a range of one to six). Parturition (giving birth) typically occurs in the early morning. Although Chinchillas do not build nests; the females will learn to use a wooden nesting box, which, when heated, prevents the first-born young from becoming too cold while the rest of the litter is being born. Blood on the nose and front paws of the female indicate that she has eaten the placenta and the birthing process is over.

Chinchilla young are fully furred at birth. They are also born with a full set of teeth, and eyes and ears are open. They are able to walk within an hour of birth. The female will stand, rather than lying down, while nursing.

The young of large litters may fight over access to the teats; clipping the incisor teeth may be necessary to prevent serious injury to the teats or to siblings. Chinchillas begin to eat solid foods at one week of age. To minimize fighting, food bowls should be large enough to accommodate the entire litter simultaneously. Weaning is at 6-8 weeks of age.

Bedding recommended for Chinchillas during parturition is Care Fresh, which is available at most pet stores, or by special order at Best Friends Veterinary Center.

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