

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CHINCHILLA SOCIETY (NCS)

The NCS was originally formed in the 1950's as the Chinchilla Fur Breeders Association Ltd. It was responsible for the importation, breeding and development of the chinchilla into the well-known animal many people own today. In 1993 the name was changed to the National Chinchilla Society. It must be stated that the Society is not associated with the fur trade.

The aims of the Society have remained the same throughout its long history. These are to encourage and promote the keeping, breeding and exhibition of quality chinchillas, whilst at all times maintaining good husbandry practices.

THE CHINCHILLA

Part of the rodent family, the chinchilla originates from the Andes, South America. An adult animal can be up to 30 to 36 cm long including its bushy tail and weigh in the region of 600-900 grams. They have a life span of 8 – 10 years, in some cases over 15 years. Chinchillas have fine dense fur, stiff whiskers, large ears and eyes. Their dense fur means that they can't harbour parasites, however, it does make them susceptible to heat stroke, so care should be taken to ensure that they don't get hot.

Their nutritional requirements are quite bland. They fair best on a commercially produced chinchilla pellet, good quality hay and fresh water.

Chinchillas are rock hoppers that like to scurry; they require floor space in their cages rather than height. Cages should be made of galvanised welded wire mesh (at least 16 gauge) with holes no larger than 1.9cm square, additionally; there should be a wooden area where the chinchilla can sit. A raised floor allows droppings, urine and partially eaten food to fall through and helps keep the cage clean.

Chinchillas are clean animals, they should be given a bath every other day in special dust to cleanse their fine fur and remove grease and dirt. Without this dust their fur becomes dull and sticks together making the fur part in great clumps. This is not only uncomfortable for the animal but unsightly and detracts from, what is after all, one of the world's most beautiful creatures.

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REGIONS AND SHOWS

The N.C.S. has four regions, Northern, West Midlands and Wales, Southern and the Scottish. Shows are held regionally between September and April with "The National Show " is the largest and final show of the year and has no novice class. Shows, whilst being contested in a serious manner, are also used as social occasions and give members the opportunity to meet other breeders, exchange ideas and to make new friends.

To enter your Chinchilla at a N.C.S. show you must be a member of the Society.

Showing

The quality chinchilla is truly a beautiful creature, and a huge amount of fun and satisfaction can be had from owning, breeding and exhibiting chinchillas. Attending NCS events is the best way you have of knowing that you are keeping your chinchilla happy and healthy, looking beautiful, and if breeding, making progress by consistently producing quality kits. It is also a fun and competitive environment, bringing excitement and fun from exhibiting!

Before the shows begin animals are groomed and made to look their best. Once groomed, the chinchillas are placed in an approved show cage and they are not removed or handled during the show. The cages are only moved to the judging bench by stewards when the classes are being judged.

Assessment bench

This is for people starting out or buying chinchillas. Participants get a one-on-one appraisal with a Judge, who will talk about the chinchilla being assessed. They will give details of its good and bad qualities, and information on what sort of chinchilla to breed it with and how to keep it looking in tip-top condition.

Novice

The Novice section of the show is run for new members. The Judge gives a detailed appraisal of the qualities of each animal and appropriate awards are given. This helps new members to become more knowledgeable about the animals they own, as well as learning the terminology used to describe chinchilla qualities.

The Championship Show

This is for breeders that have been showing for more than 5 years or have won certain awards. The judge gives appraisals of the animals that are placed 1st to Highly Commended. Winners of both the Novice and Championship classes are judged together to get special awards and go on to get the ultimate prize, the Grand Show Champion.

WHAT IS A QUALITY CHINCHILLA?

It is necessary to explain what the NCS refers to as a quality chinchilla. It is a very complex subject and in-depth information and photos are in "The Guide To Quality Chinchillas" booklet, which is in the new members pack. It helps members determine the quality of their chinchilla(s). However, the points below cover the fundamental criteria.

- In full prime (having no sign of moulting) the fur should be strong, dense, upright and approximately 3cm in length.
- When blowing lightly into the fur, the skin beneath cannot be seen and when gently pressing your hand on the back of the chinchilla it should give the impression of having bounce and resilience.
- The standard grey chinchilla should have an even veiling (the black pigment at the very top of each shaft of hair). It should cover from the neck to the base of the tail and from the centre of the back down to the white belly fur, which should be sharp blue-white, and not cream or off-colour grey.
- The conformation of a quality chinchilla is best described as blocky with the neck and hips being as equal in proportion as possible, not having wide hips with a narrow neck or an overly long body.
- Mutation chinchillas are any colour other than Standard. There are an incalculable number of mutations being bred, however, regardless of whether the animal is a standard grey or one of the many mutation colours; they should all have the qualities mentioned above.

Please photocopy and distribute at will.

THE GAZETTE

The NCS Gazette is printed every other month throughout the year. This contains lots of interesting articles, not just around exhibiting, but also around husbandry and care of these precious animals. Even if not interested in exhibiting (at least at present), many pet owners wish to keep their chinchillas as happy, healthy and looking as well as they can, and the principles of show preparation are perfect in achieving these aims.

In addition to the articles, the Gazette also contains show dates, results and judges reports.

BUYING THE RIGHT CHINCHILLA FOR YOU

One of the first things you must decide is if you want a pet or would you like to be able to breed for quality and enter shows. This will affect what chinchillas you buy and where you get them from. Mutation coloured chinchillas are the most popular pets, as the various colours are often more interesting to new owners but Standards are the most important for breeding.

If you are going to breed with your chinchillas it is well worth attending a few shows, before parting with any money. If you contact your local Secretary before the show they will be able to make sure someone is there to welcome you to the show and give you details of NCS members in your area. You should get your chinchillas directly from the people who breed them. Ideally they should be NCS breeders who exhibit. They should charge you about the same as you would expect to pay in a pet shop. Most NCS members will be able to give you a pedigree, which tells you about the animals' background and in some cases, about any animals that have won awards. As with all things, price and pedigree are not necessarily a guarantee to quality, so be sure of what you want and get a second opinion rather than purchasing the first one that comes available.

If you are purely after a pet then you may also want to consider a good pet shop. Make sure that the chinchillas are kept in clean suitable cages, have fresh food, hay and water. Although they will be asleep during the day, they should still have the characteristics of a quality chinchilla and have clear, dry eyes and mouth.

HOW TO JOIN

The National Chinchilla Society is dedicated to the constant improvement of the Chinchilla and welcomes new members.

Membership runs for a year from 1st July. You can join online at www.natchinsoc.co.uk or membership forms can be downloaded from the website or obtained by calling the NCS Hon. Secretary, Paul Spooner on 01457 856945.

Individual membership

£18 per member or partnership, this entitles you to one vote at the AGM (members must be present to vote).

Joint membership

£25 per member or partnership, this entitles you to two votes at the AGM (members must be present to vote).

Non UK membership

£30.00 per member or partnership living outside the United Kingdom. This entitles you to one vote at the AGM (members must be present to vote).

£10.00 per member or partnership living outside the United Kingdom if no Gazettes or vote is requested

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR TO JOIN ONLINE

Please visit our official website or contact one of our Regional Secretaries. www.natchinsoc.co.uk

<u>REGION</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>	<u>CONTACT NUMBER</u>
NORTHERN REGION	MR CHRIS GALT	0777 225 9241
SCOTTISH REGION	Mr Steven King	0780 121 0809
SOUTHERN REGION	Mr Andrew Lee	0758 391 6006
WEST MIDLANDS & WALES	Mrs Siân Allcoat	01926 641337

AN OWNER'S GUIDE



www.natchinsoc.co.uk