

## The History of the Chinchilla

This exotic animal was named after the Chincha people of the Andes region. The Andes Mountains in South America. Chinchilla actually means "little Chincha". Back around the close of the 19th century, the animals were known for their thick and soft fur.

There are two types of chinchillas. The chinchilla brevicaudata, which is also known as the Bolivian, Peruvian and Royal chinchilla, has a short tail. They came from the Andes Mountains in the regions of Chile, Peru and Bolivia. This chinchilla was on the verge of becoming extinct and were known for the exquisite fur. Even with the fur, the population of these animals continued to decrease. The chinchilla lanigera, which is also known as the Chilean, Coastal or Lesser chinchilla, has a long tail.

This species of chinchilla can be found in Chile. Even though the word "lanigera" means "having a woolen coat", they are covered with hair instead. The hair is soft, sleek and sticks to their skin. There are three types of chinchilla lanigera: The LaPlata are muscular, round and have a short head. The Costina has longer hind legs, slight hump and a pointed nose. The Raton is similar to the LaPlata in they way it's structured. It has a pointed nose and they are of a smaller size.

Burrows or cracks in rocks are where chinchillas reside. They can jump very well and at least up to 5 feet high. When residing in the wild, chinchillas consume fruits, seeds, plants and small insects. As far as breeding is concerned, that can take place at any time of the year. When the female chinchillas do procreate, their average length of pregnancy is 111 days. For a chinchilla, that's a long period of time compared to other animals in that group. Because their pregnancies are so long, their offspring are born with their eyes open and their body full of fur. At the time of delivery, their litter is usually one or two, with the two more times than not are twins.

The first try of breeding started in 1895. In that same year, the first animal was born and each year two litters were born. In the summer of 1896, an unknown disease halted the breeding process. By then, there were 13 animals and all of them succumbed within two months time. Around 1918, there was a resurgence of chinchillas. A man from California was interested in trapping chinchillas so he could raise them as pets.

At first, the Chilean government refused, but as the man kept asking, the government relented. During three year period, only eleven chinchillas were captured. They were brought back and bred in the United States. This process started the first chinchilla farm. This also started the process of the domestic chinchilla.

The interest in chinchilla fur started in the 16th century as international trade. Chinchilla fur is prevalent because it has a soft texture. Because of even color across the board, people like to use it for lining large pieces of

clothing or small pieces of clothing.

The fur can also be used to create an entire large piece of clothing. So many chinchillas must be destroyed in order to make a coat because their skin is so small. Because of this, one of the species became non-existent and supply for the other became scarce. People still hunt and kill domestic chinchillas to create clothing, but wild chinchillas are no longer targeted for hunting.