

CODE of BEST PRACTICES

For Chinchilla breeders

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I. PREAMBLE

The best practices hereby shall be regarded as guidelines duly providing the minimal requirements viewing the structuring of a Chinchilla farm in terms of housing, sheltering, breeding/grooming, as well as killing methods and techniques.

The included recommendations have been drafted in full conformity with the national and international legal provisions in force.

This document contains provisions concerning the following:

- Housing and enclosures
- Structuring and management of activities
- Husbandry and stockman ship
- Killing methods

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Chinchillas enjoy the brisk and ozone-rich air of the mountains, as well as the crystal-clear water and temperatures that do not exceed 18°C. As for their looks, Chinchillas may take after squirrels and rabbits. Their weight reached at maturity varies between 400-600 gr, and their length is of 28–30 cm (males being smaller both, in weight and length than females). Chinchillas may be described as follows: small head, pointed nose, black and expressive eyes, rather long (approx. 6 cm long) and hairy ears, long and curved tail, its short front legs ending in 5 fingers facilitating the grabbing of food, and its long hind-legs with 4 fingers each, enabling them to sit in a vertical position, as well.

The most precious asset of the Chinchillas is their fur, which is characterized by an exquisite finesse, elasticity and density. The diameter of the hair is approximately 200 times smaller as compared to the human hair, the pelt hair growing in tufts from one hair root with up to 70-120 hairs per root. The length of the hair may just as well reach 2.5 cm.

Actually, Chinchillas are wild animals but since they are being grown in captivity, they have become gentle and friendly. Alike other wild animals, Chinchillas are also very resistant, failing to exteriorize their pain caused by various diseases. As a rule, Chinchillas do not bite unless threatened, and they do not strive for freedom. Nevertheless, they are very curious and they like to chew whatever they may find. Moreover, Chinchillas are very clean animals, „washing” themselves on a daily basis (in a special sort of sand).

Chinchillas are active at dusk and at night, and they sleep during the day.

II. HOUSING AND ENCLOSURES

The accommodation of the chinchillas should be in a building which is well isolated that keeps the adequate temperature, ventilation and illumination is good. Floor should be easy to keep clean. Sudden noises have to be avoided. The openings (windows, doors) of the building should be provided with appropriate protection against insects, flies, rats, mice.

2.1. Ventilation

Ventilation should assure appropriate fresh air in all seasons. The accommodation should be kept so that the air velocity, the relative humidity, the levels of toxic gases and dust do not adversely affect the health and welfare of the animals.

In case failure of the artificial ventilation system a supply of fresh air shall be guaranteed.

2.2. Light

Chinchillas are nocturnal animals, but they need the change of day and night light. So they shall not be kept always in dusk or in light. About 10 hours/day light should be assured. During inspection there should be enough light for the personnel can control the animals well. After inspection the light should be reduced.

2.3. Enclosures, housing

The enclosures of the chinchillas should correspond to the following prescriptions:

- a. the accommodation should be made of such material which the chinchilla cannot gnaw.
- b. The design and construction of the enclosures must be such that injuries can be excluded.
- c. Ground surface of the cage for adult animals min 0.18m²/animal, for juvenils min 1600 cm²/animal.
- d. Minimum height of any cage should be min. 35 cm, to make possible to the animals to rear up to on their hind legs and jump and maximum 50cm.
- e. The floor of the cage should be made so that the legs of the animals cannot be injured. In case of wire-netting the distance between the vertical wires should not exceed 25 mm, and between the horizontal wires 50 mm.

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- f. Only 4 cages can be placed one above the other in order to allow without difficulty the thorough inspection of all animals.
- g. The openings of the cages must be such that the fur animals can be removed without causing pain or injuries to the animal.
- h. The cages should be provided with adequate feeding and drinking possibility, as well as hay-rack and sand bath.
- i. The animals shall be able to see each-other.

Healthcare issues, as well as appropriateness of the living environment have to be taken into account when building new shelters or when refurbishing already existing facilities. Furthermore, factors of the external environment such as noises, air pollution, climate etc. need to be carefully considered on choosing the most adequate venue of a Chinchilla farm.

There are no standard schemes in terms of organizing a Chinchilla farm. Nevertheless, the shelter must ensure the possibility of cleanliness (the ceiling, the walls, as well as the floor shall be easily washable and presenting the potential of regular disinfection), natural light (at least to a partial extent), permanent airing without creating draughts of air, and a sustainable temperature of maximum 27 °C, as well as a humidity lower than 70%.

The enclosures shall be set up in the room so as to allow access of the maintenance personnel in charge with the daily inspection of the animals.

The design, construction and maintenance of enclosures and accommodation for the Chinchillas shall at all times allow them, in accordance with their species-specific needs, sufficient room to carry out normal locomotion behavior, to groom themselves without difficulty and to lie down, to rest, to adopt sleeping postures, to stretch their limbs freely and to rise.

The minimal conditions and design parameters of the enclosures and accommodation shall be as follows:

- The enclosure shall be provided with an object to chew (e.g. piece of wood, brick etc.)
- The enclosures shall be provided either with well-drained floors, or absorbent materials placed within the enclosure itself or underneath.
- Air cooling system of which draughts of air shall not exceed the speed of 0.2 m/s
- Thermometers, as well as devices to humidity meters shall also be provided

The micro-climate of the housing facility/enclosure shall adjust to the following parameters:

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- The adequate temperature shall be within 16–17 °C – not lower than 14 °C in the maternity areas and not above 27 °C in all the other enclosure and housing related areas.
- Humidity shall be below 70%

III. MANAGEMENT

3.1. Food & Water

All chinchillas must at all times have access to potable water and must be fed daily with an adequate, nutritious, hygienic and balanced feed.

3.2. Maintenance

The chinchillas shall be cared for by a sufficient number of personnel with adequate knowledge of this fur animal.

For thorough inspection of the animals, special attention shall be paid to bodily condition, condition of hair, skin, eyes, ears, tail, legs and feet. Healthy animals have sounds, activity, movements and posture appropriate to their species, age, sex, breed or physiological condition. Signs of good health include: clear bright eyes, good posture, clean and – depending on species and season – shiny coat, sound feet and legs, normal feeding, drinking, sucking or suckling behavior if appropriate, normal getting up, lying down, and resting behavior.

Thorough inspection does not mean that each animal has to be examined individually. Individual examination is to be made only in the case of those animals for which the overall inspection indicates individual inspection as being necessary.

Chinchillas are nocturnal animals. They eat, drink and play at night, and they sleep during the day. Therefore, it is very important for the Chinchillas to be protected from sudden or loud noises during the day, the caretaker himself/herself being the one who can create and ensure a living environment free of sudden movements and noises.

The stockman should inspect the animals at least twice a day: in the morning and in the afternoon. It has to be taken care that the chinchillas get appropriate feed, hay or hay-cakes, and that they have continuous access to an ad lib supply of water.

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They shall have an access to a sand bath at least once a day, which should take at least 20 minutes.

Faeces and rest of feedstuff shall be removed in appropriate frequency, at least weekly in case of litter-tray, and at least monthly in case of wire-netting floors to prevent adverse effects on the animals.

Those parts of the accommodation with which the animals get into contact shall be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected when it gets vacant. In case the whole premises get vacant they shall be also cleansed and disinfected.

When the animals have to be caught it is recommended to hold the tail and the ears and set the animal on the arm. It is prohibited to move the chinchillas by their tail or ears.

After giving birth the litter-tray shall be cleaned, in case of wirenetting floor soft paper padding shall be put into the cage in order the new borns dry quicker.

3.3 Transportation

For the transportation only a vehical can be used in which the temperature can be held under 25°C. Chinchillas can be transported only in special boxes. The sides of the box shall be made so as the animals cannot hurt eachother. It must be possible for the animals to turn around in the trasport boxes.

Size of the transport box shall be min. 16 x 14 cm, heith 16 cm. A female with youngs shall have the double space. The transport boxes shall be fixed to eachother container-like, airflow shall be assured between the boxes, but the boxes shall not move. The boxes shall be provided with straw or sawdust.

The time of transport can exceed the 8 hours only in case:

- a. there is enough feedstuff and water for the transportation period
- b. feedstuff and water can be replaced by ¼ apple.

3.4 Reproduction.

Sexual maturity of the female chinchilla is reached between the age of 6 to 7 months and for the male chinchilla between 8 to 9 months.

Females are in a heat once in 28-35 days.

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Pregnancy period lasts for 111 days, after which female Chinchillas can give birth to 1-6 cubs. The male shall have another four-day access to the female subsequent to the cubing, when another fecundation can be produced. Once the four-day access period is over, access to the female shall be denied in order to avoid jeopardizing the cubs' lives.

3.5 Evolution of the cubs.

Weaning of the pups may not be done before the pups are 7 weeks old, unless the mother or pup welfare is threatened because of exceptional circumstances. After weaning and until they become mature, the groups of youngsters located preferably in their own litter.

IV. KILLING

Killing shall be done by a competent person without causing undue agitation, pain or other forms of distress.

The tables below lists the principal methods which can, when used correctly, meet these requirements, and which should be applied when permitted under domestic law, and in accordance with domestic law.

The person responsible for the killing shall ensure that for each animal the requirements as above are fulfilled, and that the animal is dead before further procedures are carried out.

Killing shall be done so as to cause the least possible disturbance to the other animals.

Type	Methods	Description
Physical methods	Electrocution	<p>A method of electrocution shall be used which leads to immediate loss of consciousness and cardiac arrest. Electrocution equipment shall be fitted with a device indicating the current under load, which is clearly visible to the operator.</p> <p>Electrodes shall be applied ear to tail with a current of minium value of 0.57 amperes for at least 60 seconds.</p>

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	Projectiles penetrating the brain	Animals may be killed by projectiles which enter the cerebral cortex. If a captive-bolt method is used bleeding shall be performed immediately after use.
Inhalation methods	Carbon monoxide	<p>The animals must be introduced into the chamber only after it contains carbon monoxide at a concentration of at least 1% by volume, preferably supplied from a cylinder containing 100% carbon monoxide.</p> <p>They shall be introduced one by one, and it shall be ensured that before the next animal is introduced the previous one is unconscious or dead.</p> <p>The gas produced by a petrol engine which has been specially adapted for the purpose may be used provided that this gas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has been adequately cooled (e.g. by passing the gas through water), - has been sufficiently filtered (e.g. by a metal filter) and - is not accompanied by irritant gases or material, <p>The engine shall be tested ever year before the killing of animals take place.</p> <p>Animals shall not be placed in the chamber until the minimum concentration of carbon monoxide has been reached.</p> <p>Animals shall be kept under visual supervision at all times.</p> <p>Animals shall remain in the chamber until</p>

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		they are dead.
	Carbon dioxide in high concentration	<p>Under no circumstances shall gases enter the chamber or the location where animals are to be stunned and killed in a way that it could create burns or excitement by freezing or lack of humidity.</p> <p>Carbon dioxide may be used to kill chinchillas until less aversive gases or gas mixtures with equivalent effect are available.</p> <p>The animals must be introduced into the chamber only when the atmosphere contains the highest possible concentration of carbon dioxide supplied by a source of 100% carbon dioxide. The minimum concentration of 80% of carbon dioxide shall be used.</p>
	Chloroform	<p>Chloroform may be used to kill chinchilla. The animals must be introduced into the chamber only if it contains a saturated chloroform-air mixture, to avoid suffocation.</p>

The chamber in which the animals are exposed to the gas (mixture) is designed, constructed and maintained in such a way as to avoid injury to the animals and allow them to be observed.

The gas must induce deep general anesthesia and must then cause death.

The animals must remain in the chamber until they are dead.

Except when permitted by law, only gas or gas mixtures which do not cause breathlessness or respiratory distress during induction shall be used. Gas or gas mixtures which are aversive should not be used.