

Long-tailed Chinchilla

Scientific Name: *Chinchilla lanigera*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Chinchillidae



Head and body length is 9 to 14 inches with a 3 to 6 inch tail. Females are larger weighing 1.5 to 2 lbs., males rarely exceeding 1 lb. They have extremely dense, soft, silky fur which may grow to 1.5 inches long. They may have as many as 40 hairs growing from one follicle. Color is pearly or brown-grey fur with black tips on the upper parts. They have conspicuous long whiskers with which they can feel their way in dark tunnels. They are primarily nocturnal or crepuscular, but can be found climbing and jumping among the rocks on a sunny day. Historically colonies up to 100 lived together, often on north-facing slopes. Several pairs may share a den. They shelter in rocks and crevices or at the base of spiny plants. Fur is kept clean by rolling in sand or volcanic dust and then shaking it out. They sit on their haunches and hold

food to eat in the front paws. Moisture is obtained from plant material and dew. Chinchillas are extremely endangered in the wild because of the fur trade. It requires a minimum of 140 pelts to make one coat.

Range

Historical range 1200-1800 ft. in the Andes. Now confined to northern Chile.

Habitat

Rocky, barren area

Gestation

111 days.

Litter

1-6

Behavior

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Reproduction

Females are very aggressive toward each other and towards males, even in estrus. Estrus cycle is approximately 38 days. In captive populations in northern hemisphere breeding season is November to May; in the southern hemisphere it is from May to November. Newborns are fully furred with eyes open at birth, and nurse for 6-8 weeks. Sexual maturity occurs at 6 months for females and 8 months for males.

Wild Diet

Vegetation: grass, nuts, leaves, roots, lichen