

Bonding Chinchillas



Chinchillas are very social animals and should not be kept alone. Keeping them in pairs of the same sex provides them with the companionship and social interaction they need.

Introducing chinchillas should be done very slowly. It is not uncommon for chinchillas to fight when first meeting. Just like people, each chinchilla has a unique personality and may not get along with every chinchilla they meet. There are even some chinchillas that prefer to be alone. Be prepared for the possibility that your chinchillas may not bond.



Quarantine

It is strongly recommended to quarantine your new chinchilla for at least two weeks. Regardless of where you got your chinchilla from, it is possible for the new chinchilla to have an illness of some kind that may be contagious to your current chinchilla. Some illnesses might be difficult to spot right away, such as ringworm, which is highly contagious. After the two week quarantine, if your chinchilla looks and acts healthy, you can move forward with bonding. If not, consult a veterinarian before starting the bonding process.



Side-by-Side Bonding Method

There are several methods for bonding chinchillas. We recommend the safest method called side-by-side bonding which involves using two habitats.

Start by placing two habitats close enough together that the chinchillas can interact with but not touch each other. This allows the chinchillas to see, hear, and smell each other without physically harming one another. After a few weeks, you can move the habitats together so they are touching. If the chinchillas begin fighting between the bars, move the habitats apart again. After another week or so with no fighting, try allowing the chinchillas to play together outside of the habitats in a neutral area.



Setting up two dust baths near each other during play time can also help your chinchillas bond. It will most likely take multiple sessions, so do not expect everything to go well the very first time. Once all is going well during open playtime together, the chinchillas can be moved into the same habitat. Make sure the habitat is thoroughly cleaned before putting both chinchillas inside to help keep things as neutral as possible. Continue to monitor both chinchillas and if fighting occurs, go back to the previous steps.

Of course, there are other methods of bonding chinchillas including open playtime introductions and ‘smooshing’, but both of those methods have a higher risk of injury.

