



CARING FOR MY NEW CHINCHILLA

John Bankston




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Words in **bold** throughout can be found in the Glossary.



Cheery Chinchillas

Chinchillas look cuddly. They have sweet bunny faces. They have big eyes and ears. They also have very soft fur. Chinchillas love to play but they aren't like cats or dogs. They want to climb not cuddle.

Raising a chinchilla isn't easy. They get shy. They stay awake at night. They can make a big mess. Plus, they are smart enough to escape if you aren't extra careful.

Your new chinchilla needs time. It may not want to be held. Still, most pet chinchillas are very tame.

Happy chinchillas have a space of their own that's cool and clean. People with pet "chinnies" love them. You might too. Before you bring one home learn its **habits**. Reading this book is a great place to start!

DID YOU KNOW?

Soft chinchillas are related to the prickly porcupine.

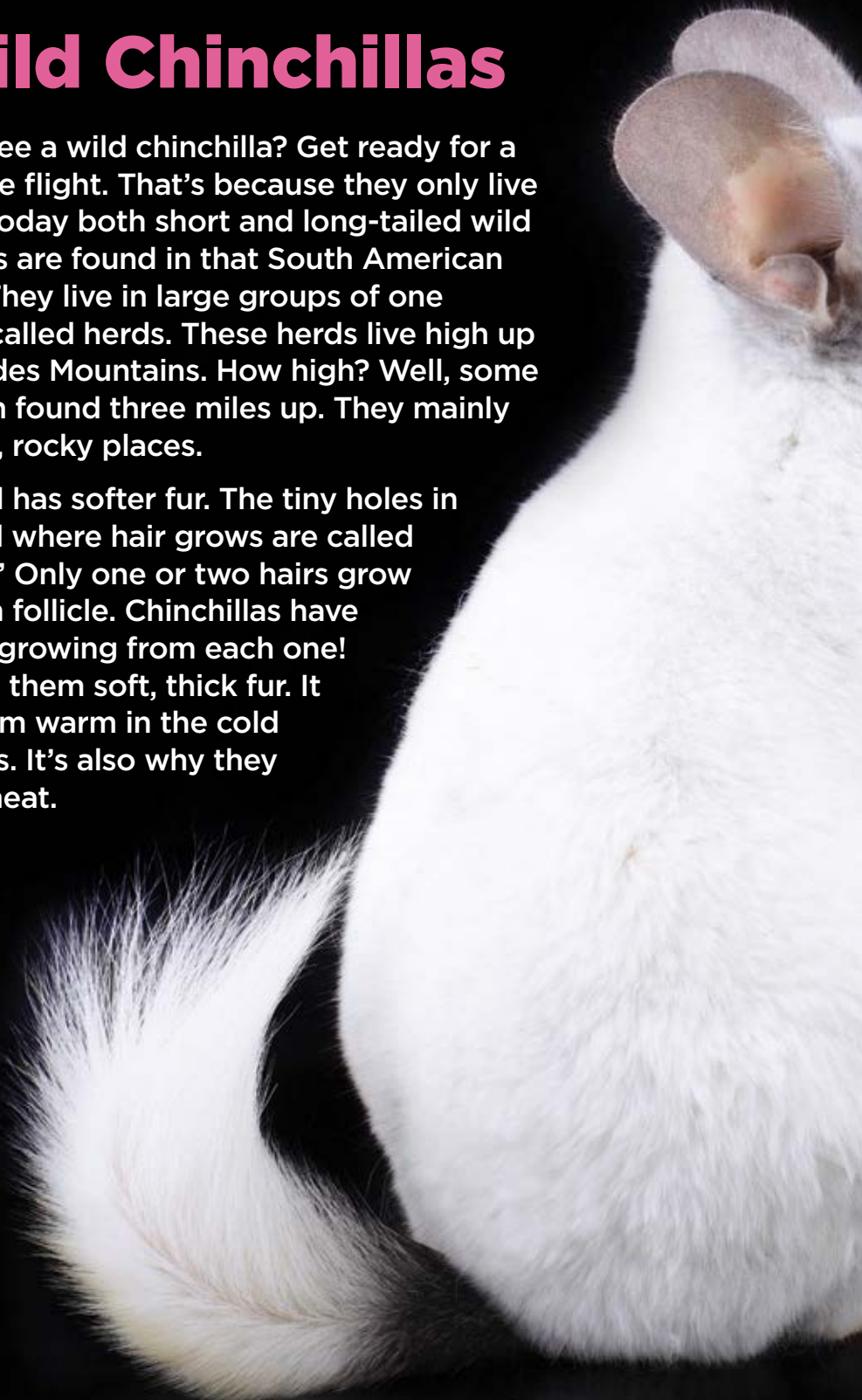




Wild Chinchillas

Want to see a wild chinchilla? Get ready for a 5,000 mile flight. That's because they only live in Chile. Today both short and long-tailed wild chinchillas are found in that South American country. They live in large groups of one hundred called herds. These herds live high up in the Andes Mountains. How high? Well, some have been found three miles up. They mainly live in dry, rocky places.

No animal has softer fur. The tiny holes in your head where hair grows are called "**follicles.**" Only one or two hairs grow from each follicle. Chinchillas have over fifty growing from each one! This gives them soft, thick fur. It keeps them warm in the cold mountains. It's also why they hate the heat.





An adult chinchilla's body is just over half a foot tall and one foot long. The tail adds another half a foot. Females weigh almost two pounds. Males weigh just a pound. Unlike most animals, males help raise the young. Pet chinchillas are twice as big as wild chinchillas.

Chinchillas are **rodents**. They have sharp teeth which never stop growing. When they eat, they sit up and hold their food with their front paws. Wild chinchillas are blue-grey. Pet chinchillas come in many colors like white, black, and light brown. There are even **violet** colored chinchillas!

DID YOU KNOW?

Wild chinchillas were almost hunted to **extinction** for their fur. Today it is against the law to buy or sell wild chinchillas.

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