

# Meerkat

**Scientific Name:**

*Suricata suricatta hahni*

**Range:**

Southern Africa, south of the Orange River

**Habitat:**

Found exclusively on the semiarid plains of Southern Africa

**Average Size:**

Body Length: 9.75- 13 inches  
Body-Tail Length: 16.5–22.75 in.  
Weight: 1.3-2 pounds

**Lifespan:**

Up to 12 years in captivity

**Diet:**

*Wild:* Mainly invertebrates, sometimes small rodents, eggs, lizards and roots/bulbs of plants. Have even been known to eat scorpions and some snakes.

*Zoo:* lams cat food, sweet potato, lettuce, apples, oranges, grapes, and mealworms

**Reproduction:**

*Gestation:* 77 days

*Litter size:* 2-5, usually 4

**Appearance:**

Meerkats are small and golden brown in color. Across the back are dark strips, and the eyes are ringed with black. The fur is short and soft. The Tail is about 2/3 as long as the body and tipped in black.

**Predators:**

Raptors, snakes and other carnivores

**Population Status:**

Stable

**About the Animal**

These relatives of the mongoose are best known for their habit of standing on their hind legs. This position serves a couple of purposes: it allows the animal to better see its surroundings and helps to warm its body after the cool desert nights.

Meerkats live in groups of about 20 in each burrow or colony,

with each member having a specific job that benefits the colony as a whole. Jobs include babysitter, sentries, hunters and teachers.

Sentries stand on a log or bush and watch for predators and other threats. When one is seen, the sentry will emit a warning call that allows the colony to get to the safety of the burrow in plenty of time.

This animal spends much of its time above ground playing. When not engaged in play, they are usually busy digging or turning over stones in search of food.

**Mating and Reproduction:**

Meerkats are seasonal breeders, with births occurring in November and December. The entire colony will help protect the young. Mothers do not take their infants with them while foraging for food. Instead, they leave them in a crèche – a group of youngsters watched over by younger females.

**Amazing Information:**

Meerkats that live on the open plains will share their burrows with ground squirrels.



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