

Meerkats(2)

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Meerkats are a type of small mongoose. In the wild they live in desert areas of Africa, such as the Kalahari Desert.

A meerkat is about 35 cm to 50 cm long and also has a long tail, about 25 cm long. Their eyes have black patches around them and they have brown noses and small black ears. The coat is usually brown, tan or grey. Across their backs they have stripes and each meerkat has a different pattern of stripes.

They have 4 toes on each foot with claws which are ideal for digging burrows underground as well as for climbing.

Meerkats like to live in family groups in underground warrens. They move to new warrens quite frequently. A group of meerkats is called a 'mob' a 'clan' or a 'gang'. The clan usually has about 10 meerkats in it but sometimes there can be as many as 30 or more living together.

The babies are born with hair, but their eyes are shut. For the first two weeks of their lives they are fed with the mother's milk and stay underground. When they come out into the open they are taught how to catch food by elder meerkats. They eat insects and other animals such as worms, small lizards, spiders, eggs and fruit. They quite like to eat scorpions, despite the danger from the scorpion's sting.



When they go outside during daylight hours one of the meerkats will take it in turns to be the guard. It will sit upright and keep a lookout for danger, such as a bird of prey, large snakes or hyenas.



Meerkats are often featured on TV adverts

Name:

Questions:

1. Where do meerkats live in the wild?

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2. About how long is a meerkat?

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3. What is the length of a meerkat's tail?

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4. Briefly describe a meerkat.

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5. What is a group of meerkats called?

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6. What do the baby meerkats feed on for the first two weeks of their lives?

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7. Name three foods that adult meerkats might eat.

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8. Why do meerkats always have a guard when outside?

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9. What animals are likely to try and catch and eat a meerkat?

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Answers

1. Meerkats live in desert areas of Africa, such as the Kalahari Desert.
2. A meerkat is between 35 cm to 50 cm long.
3. A meerkat's tail is about 25 cm long.
4. Description of a meerkat.
5. A group of meerkats is called a mob, clan or gang.
6. Baby meerkats are fed with the mother's milk for the first two weeks of their lives.
7. Any three foods that adult meerkats might eat: insects, worms, fruit etc.
8. When they go out during the day one of the meerkats acts as a guard to look out for danger.
9. Birds of prey, large snakes and hyenas might catch and eat a meerkat.