

Name _____



Small and Fascinating Meerkats

Meerkats are small, fascinating animals that live in the dry, open areas of southern Africa. These creatures belong to the mongoose family and are known for their teamwork and alertness. A meerkat has a slender body covered in light brown fur with dark patches around its eyes. It uses its sharp claws for digging burrows and finding food.

Meerkats are about 10 to 14 inches long from head to body, with their tails adding another 7 to 10 inches. They usually weigh between 1.5 and 2 pounds, making them very light animals. Their fur is light brown with faint stripes running across their backs, and their dark eye patches help reduce glare from the sun.

Meerkats live in large groups called mobs or clans. A clan can have up to 40 meerkats! They work together to stay safe and care for each other. Each member has a role. Some meerkats keep watch for danger while others search for food or take care of the young pups.

Meerkats are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and animals. They enjoy munching on insects, small reptiles, eggs, fruit, and roots. With their excellent sense of smell, they can sniff out tasty treats underground.

One of the most interesting things about meerkats is how they stand up on their hind legs. This helps them get a better view of their surroundings to watch for predators like eagles, hawks, and snakes. A meerkat on guard duty will give a special call to warn the others if danger is near. If a predator comes too close, the entire mob may work together to chase it away.

Meerkats are also known for their underground homes called burrows. These burrows are like a maze with many tunnels and rooms. The tunnels help protect the meerkats from the hot sun and keep them safe from predators. The whole clan shares the burrow and helps keep it clean.

Baby meerkats, called pups, are born in these burrows. They are blind and helpless when born, so the adults take turns caring for them. As the pups grow, the adults teach them important skills, like how to find food and stay safe.

Meerkats are amazing animals because of their teamwork and clever ways of staying safe. Their unique habits and strong sense of family make them one of the most interesting animals in the wild.