

# Meerkat

## Fact Sheet

Common name: Meerkat

Scientific name: *Suricata suricatta*

Size: 0.68kg.

Diet: Meerkats are carnivorous. They eat insects, eggs and small animals.

Habitat: Open plains and savannas of southern Africa.



Meerkats are small burrowing mammals that belong to the **mongoose** family. Meerkat fur is light brown with dark stripes on their backs, helping them blend into their surroundings. They have black patches around their eyes, which help reduce glare from the sun. They have long, curved claws for digging **burrows**, which they use for shelter and staying cool during the hottest parts of the day.

They are very social animals and live in groups called **mobs**, which can have up to 30 members and can often contain multiple families. All members of the mob help take care of the young meerkats, teaching them how to find food and stay safe.

Meerkats are primarily active during the day, but when temperatures rise too high, they retreat to their cool burrows. While some members of the group forage for food, one meerkat, known as the **sentinel**, usually stands guard. This sentinel keeps an eye out for predators like birds of prey, snakes, or jackals by standing on its hind legs and scanning the area. If a threat is spotted, the lookout warns the mob with a series of alarm calls, and everyone quickly dives into their burrows for safety. Meerkats use a variety of **vocalisations**, such as barks and chirps, to communicate with each other.



# Vocabulary

**burrow** - a hole or tunnel in the ground that animals dig to live in or hide from danger.

**mob** - the collective noun for a group of meerkats

**mongoose** - a small, slender mammal with a long body and tail, known for being quick and hunting small prey like insects and snakes

**sentinel** - an animal that keeps watch for danger to protect its group

**vocalisation** - sounds or noises made by animals to communicate

What is one fact you learnt about meerkats?

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What do you like the most about meerkats?

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What is one question you still have about meerkats?

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