

Meerkat Lessons

You might know about meerkats from Timon, a character in *The Lion King*. Now the small animals are getting more attention. Scientists from England say that meerkats teach their kids, just as humans do. "Wild meerkats school their young," say the scientists.



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Meerkats grow to a standing height of 12 inches. They weigh about 2 pounds.

Meerkats live in southern Africa's deserts in groups as large as 30. They are the only known **mammals** besides humans to teach their young. A mammal is a warm-blooded animal that feeds its young with milk.

Most animal youngsters just copy what they see. Meerkats, however, show their pups how to catch insects and other **prey**. Prey is an animal that is eaten by another animal. Scientists watched as young meerkats were taught how to handle dangerous scorpions without getting hurt.

Question Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Meerkat Lessons” Questions

- _____ 1. Meerkats can be described as
 - a. lonely.
 - b. caring.
 - c. careless.
 - d. forgetful.
- _____ 2. Meerkats are _____ than an average dog.
 - a. heavier
 - b. taller
 - c. smaller
 - d. wider
- _____ 3. Meerkats enjoy
 - a. cold weather.
 - b. being by themselves.
 - c. lions.
 - d. being with other meerkats.
- _____ 4. A meerkat takes care of its young by
 - a. catching food and feeding it to the young.
 - b. teaching the young to catch food.
 - c. sending the young off on their own.
 - d. teaching the young to start a new group of meerkats.
- _____ 5. Why would meercats teach their pups to catch a scorpion?

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Meerkat Lessons” Answer Sheet

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Answers will vary. Scorpions are a food that meerkats eat. Some scorpions are poisonous and could harm the meerkats that do not _____ know how to handle them.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: scorpion, warm-blooded