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.

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.
“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 meerkats teach their pups to catch a scorpion?

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“Meerkat Lessons” Answer Sheet

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5. Why would meerkats teach their pups to catch a scorpion?
   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