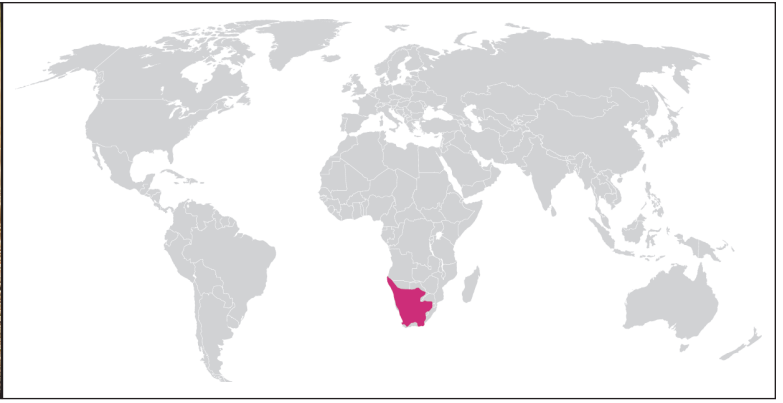


updated June 2017



<b>Range</b>	Angola, Namibia, South Africa and south Botswana
<b>Habitat</b>	Savannah, deserts, and semi-deserts
<b>Diet (wild)</b>	Insects, birds, mice and lizards
<b>Diet (captivity)</b>	Dry dog food, assorted produce and crickets for treats
<b>Description/ Size</b>	Length: 12 inches; weight: 2 pounds. Coat is tan to light gray with irregular transverse bands on the back. The tip of tail, ears and rings around eyes are black.
<b>Lifespan</b>	Wild: 10 years. Captivity: 17 years
<b>Reproduction</b>	After a 73-day gestation period, the female gives birth to 2–5 young in a nest at the end of a burrow. Breeding occurs in the warmest and wettest months of the year.
<b>Behavior</b>	Meerkats are diurnal and spend their nights underground in burrow or warrens. The morning hours may be spent “sunbathing” in burrow openings. Their long front claws serve to construct these complex burrow systems, as well as being useful for digging for food. They may also inhabit burrows dug by other animals. Meerkats are gregarious and live in groups of 5–40. Their matriarchal society will band together to drive off predators. They maintain communication while foraging with soft grunts. Meerkats have been shot or gassed in their burrows as rabies carriers. Even so, populations continue to flourish.
<b>Our animals</b>	1 female, 4 males. Born: 11/01/2009 (female); 05/01/2012, 11/01/2012, 11/01/2009 [2] (males). Arrived from Disney’s Animal Kingdom in 2017.
<b>Cool stuff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sentinel” behavior is one of their trademarks: At least one meerkat stands upright on hind legs and keeps a lookout for possible danger, with each member taking a turn. When danger is present, the sentinel barks an alarm call, sending everyone to cover. Sentry duty is usually approximately an hour long.</li> <li>• A group of meerkats is called a mob, gang or clan. Clans usually contain about 20 meerkats, but some super-clans have 50 or more members.</li> <li>• Meerkats babysit the young in the group. Females that have never produced offspring often lactate to feed the alpha pair’s young. They also protect the babies from threats, often endangering their own lives. On warning of danger, babysitters take the young underground to safety and are prepared to defend them if the danger follows.</li> <li>• Meerkats are immune to certain types of venom, including the very potent venom of the scorpions in the Kalahari Desert.</li> <li>• In the movie <i>The Lion King</i>, Timone is a meerkat.</li> <li>• Meerkats are in the same family as mongooses.</li> <li>• Although meerkats are basically diurnal, their activity is controlled largely by the soil temperature. They are only active when the sun is present and warms the surface of their burrows. When the weather is overcast or raining, meerkats do not emerge from their underground retreats. Similarly, during midday, if temperatures are too high, meerkats will return to the burrow to cool off.</li> </ul>

**Phylum**  
Chordata

**Class**  
Mammalia

**Order**  
Carnivora

**Family**  
Herpestidae

**Genus**  
Suricata

**species**  
*S. suricatta*